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ABSTRACT

This document consists of six issues of a bimonthly newsletter that focuses on home schooling, providing parents in the United States and other nations with ideas, activities, research, and resources to teach their children at home. Each issue contains short news items and reports on home schooling, letters from parents, letters on the challenges and concerns of home schooling, book and resource reviews, and a resource and information list. In addition, issue 90 contains a directory of families practicing home schooling and a list of home schooling organizations. Feature reports and letters from parents address such issues as: (1) homeschoolers of color; (2) the transition from homeschooling to college; (3) homeschooling an only child; (4) the transition from school to homeschool; (5) homeschooling for low-income families; (6) homeschooling group activities; (7) an interview with a school superintendent who supports homeschooling; (8) evaluation of homeschool students; and (9) communication with school officials. (MDM)

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Growing Without Schooling

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Alex Huffman is among those who write for this issue's Focus, "Creative Solutions," pages 14-17.

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"We can't afford that. There isn't one in our area. What *is* available isn't exactly what we were looking for." How many times have you thought about possible opportunities and then decided they were impossible, for reasons like these?

Most families have probably said exactly these things at least once, if not many times. There's nothing wrong with saying them. The trick is not to stop *after* you've said them, not to give up and assume that you can't do the thing you want to do.

For this issue's Focus, we asked young GWS readers to write about creative solutions that they and their parents have found when confronted with logistical problems. Since one of the more common logistical problems families face has to do with not being able to afford classes or activities, many of the kids' stories have to do with finding ways to trade skills or volunteer help in exchange for the class they want, or to earn the money for it in some other way.

All of these things take time, of course, and may sometimes come with their own frustrations. Alex Huffman writes about volunteering for a group called Horses for the Handicapped in exchange for getting time to ride the horses himself. Besides the time that volunteering takes, the arrangement is sometimes frustrating to Alex because he doesn't always get his own time with the horses right away. Celeste Chan writes about delivering papers to earn money for her ballet classes, which makes her schedule even busier than the six dance classes a week already make it. In some obvious ways, it would be easier if these kids just had the money to do what they wanted to do and didn't have to bother with the creative solutions that they describe here.

But as they themselves point out, bartering, volunteering, or taking another job often ends up being more fun and more interesting than just handing over the money would be. Alex writes that he plans to keep his volunteer job even if his family manages to save enough money to buy a horse and build a corral, because he enjoys the work and learns so much from it. Mika Perrine writes about giving violin lessons to a young boy in exchange for practicing Spanish conversation with his mother. That too takes more time than just paying for Spanish lessons would have taken, but in the end Mika has enjoyed the experience of teaching violin and - no small thing - such arrangements build connections between people that more typical monetary transactions are less likely to build.

Lack of money is not the only problem requiring a creative solution. Sonnet Pierce describes how pen-pals became a solution to the problem of not having any other homeschoolers in the area. Sara Dilliplane writes about how her family figured out ways to let her and her sister be at home when they were only 9 and 7 even though her mother worked outside the home part time. Sara writes that the experience of figuring out a solution to this problem "opened our minds to how what seems almost impossible can sometimes be solved." That's exactly the message we want this issue's Focus to deliver. — Susannah Sheffer

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News & Reports

Holt Associates kids

Office News & Announcements

[SS:] Pat and Day Farenga welcomed their third child, Audrey Kahnema, on October 7th. All are doing well. With Day temporarily out of the office and Donna Richoux off to The Netherlands (see Office News, GWS #89), our staff has had to do a lot of readjusting and learning to handle different tasks, and they've managed admirably.

I had an interesting and enjoyable time visiting the Southwest Acadiana Homeschoolers support group in Rayne, Louisiana on October 9th and 10th. On the first day, I held a writing workshop for nine children and then a general discussion session with a larger group of kids. On the second day I spoke to the parents, first about how homeschooling can be different from school, and then about what kind of adult help is helpful to kids. It was fun to meet so many new homeschoolers and to have a chance to work with some of the kids in more depth than a quick visit usually allows.

Our third annual Homeschooling Information Fair is scheduled for March 13, 1993. We'll have workshops by Nancy Wallace, author of *Child's Work*, and by people from our office. In the weeks before the fair we will send out pre-registration forms to homeschoolers in our general area, so if you aren't on our mailing list and would like to be, let us know.

Julie Scandora (WA) writes: "I greatly appreciated the interviews with 'graduated' homeschoolers in GWS #89. The subjects covered are ones I sometimes wonder about, even though I feel confident that homeschooling is best. Reading the interviews, I thought that this is just what the skeptics, such as my parents, need to read. Maybe those of us close to such skeptical relations should consider gift subscriptions of GWS for them. It's a low-key, nondefensive way for them to see inside this homeschooling thing." Good idea – this would help all of us!

Our 1993 Directory takes up more pages in this issue than in any previous year, which gives some indication of how the homeschooling movement is growing. It's very exciting to publish such a long list of homeschoolers – and, for that matter, to be up to our 90th issue of GWS!

Receiving Services from Federal Programs

[PF:] The U.S. Department of Education Office of Private Education has just released its *Handbook on Serving Private School Children With Federal Education Programs* (October 1992). The purpose of the handbook is to "(1) Inform representatives of children enrolled in private elementary and secondary schools of the resources available through federal education programs ... (2) Compile material useful to public school officials who administer federal education programs for private elementary and secondary school students, so they can better carry out the full intent of the statutes."

Homeschooling is mentioned several times as a legitimate private educational option. On page 10 it says, "Another important option for families is home schooling." On page 17 it says:

"May children who are schooled at home receive services from federal education programs?

"It may be permissible under certain federal statutes and regulations to extend federal education program services to eligible home schooled children, if this education is being provided in accord with applicable state and local regulations and is considered by the state to be providing elementary and secondary education. One such example would be for an eligible home schooled child to have a tutor paid for by Chapter 1 funds. Another example would be the provision of occupational therapy or speech therapy for a child with a disability by the LEA (local education agency)."

Homeschoolers interested in such issues can find out how to get this handbook by writing Office of Private Education, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave SW, Washington DC 20202-0122 or calling 202-401-1365.

News about Diplomas for Homeschoolers

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction has issued new guidelines for homeschoolers who want to obtain a high school diploma, according to the September 1992 newsletter of the North Dakota Home School Association. A law passed during the last legislative session had authorized the DPI to issue a "home-based diploma" to students who have completed the state's requirements for high school graduation, but apparently the Superintendent of Public Instruction was reluctant to do this.

The new guidelines now specify that the school district in which the homeschooler lives must provide written assurance that the homeschooler has completed the requirements for high school graduation.

The September 1992 issue of *The Grapevine*, a Montana homeschool newsletter, reports that a Review Committee has been meeting to consider proposing changes to the GED regulations in Montana. Any changes this committee ends up proposing would be submitted to the Board of Public Education for its consideration. The Board doesn't have to adopt these proposals; it may ignore them, make its own changes in them, or call for a public hearing.

The proposals thus far include changing the name of the credential from "Montana High School Equivalency Certificate" to "Montana High School Equivalency Diploma" and simplifying the age eligibility requirements for applicants under 19. *The Grapevine* says:

"The new proposals recommend that 18 year olds be allowed to take the test if they are no longer enrolled in school, not a graduate of an accredited high school, and submit a Request for Approval Form to the testing center. Sixteen- and 17-year-old applicants would be required to submit a form to the testing center with signatures of approval from the student, the parent or guardian, and the chief education officer of the last school attended. If the chief education officer denied approval, appeal could be made to the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

"Before the committee met in May, the American Council on Education GED commissioners decided the lowest age for taking the tests in any state will be 16 years."

News from New Zealand

Claire Aumonier writes in issue #1 of The International Home Educator (PO Box 454, Te Awamutu, New Zealand):

There are approximately 3000 children being homeschooled in New Zealand. That's about 0.5% of all school-age children here. Only ten years ago, there were well under a hundred [homeschoolers]...

A few years ago, an Assistant Director of Education (a now obsolete government office) confided his opinion that "homeschoolers won't be seen as a threat to the system until their numbers reach 0.2% of school-age children."

Well, threat or not, the relationship between homeschoolers and the New Zealand government has improved almost beyond measure over the past ten years.

Not so long ago (maybe seven years), for example, in order to be granted the necessary "Certificate of Exemption from Enrollment in a Registered School," a parent would be asked to outline a 25 hours per week timetable for [teaching] of

the child! In other words, home education had to virtually mirror school methods and subjects taught. Conditions for homeschoolers are very different now.

N.Z. law requires that a child must be allowed to homeschool when he or she "will be taught at least as regularly and as well as in a registered school." Of course, since no data exists with regard to how "well" schools perform (!), the law is applied entirely subjectively. Whilst at first consideration this may seem to be unacceptable, it does in fact provide a great deal of room for negotiation, which must be seen as healthy for the development of alternative approaches to education. Without this room for negotiation we would be in danger of complete state control of education.

A great deal of lobbying and education of the "powers that be" has occurred. It is now usual for parents to be allowed to homeschool after providing little more than a brief statement with regard to their intentions, their commitment, and their knowledge of resources available. That they can and will provide for their children's social needs is also important to the Ministry of Education. There is a requirement (untested in a court of law) that approximately every two years the Ministry may review the education being provided. This should be a pretty informal event. The children need not be present and certainly no testing is involved.

There are still one or two Ministry officials who step over the mark and don't seem to understand the rights of homeschoolers, but generally speaking, conditions are reasonable at the moment.

School Boards *Don't* Have Power

Earl Stevens (ME) writes:

In GWS #89 ["News Briefs"] Sean Wolf Hill reports incorrectly that Maine homeschooling regulations have been amended by the Department of Education so that approval power has been restored to the local school boards. The regulations have indeed been amended, and the paperwork has changed somewhat, but local school boards continue to remain powerless to deny the right of Maine families to practice home education. I should mention that Chapter 130 could be more clear about this and that Mr. Hill is by no means the first person this year to be confused by the language.

Because of widespread abuses, all authority to regulate home education was taken away from local school boards by the Maine legislature in 1989, and it remains taken away. Maine homeschoolers are not required to have any contact with local school officials beyond mailing them a photocopy of the paperwork that is routinely mailed to the Maine Department of Education.

The state is very explicit that copies of state-required paperwork sent to local school districts are "for informational purposes only." This statement was printed on the application form by the Maine Department of Education at the request of the Board of Directors of the Maine Homeschool Association. We wanted to be certain that local school boards did not become confused and begin thinking that they were required or had the right to play an active role in the approval process.

For the plain facts about the Maine regulatory climate, homeschoolers should consider membership in the Maine Homeschool Association, our state's grassroots, nonsectarian, all-volunteer home education support association. Maine is a relatively easy state in which to practice home education, and, in spite of the occasional confusion and the "schoolish" language of the regulations, Maine families have been able to practice many diverse styles of home education, including unschooling, without interference from education officials.

Maine homeschooling families who are being misled or harassed by local school officials should notify the Maine Homeschool Association right away: PO Box 9715-199, Portland ME 04104.

Testing Discourages Innovation

An article by Elizabeth Schultz in the 10/11/92 *Atlanta Journal/Atlanta Constitution* describes the Saturn School, an innovative public school in St. Paul, MN. The school opened in 1989 and featured cooperative learning spaces and labs (as opposed to classrooms with desks), and had no report cards, required textbooks, or grade levels. But the teachers weren't allowed to do away with standardized tests, and now that the kids' scores have been declining, the school has been told that the project will be terminated if the scores don't improve. The article continues:

After years of study, researchers and psycholinguists have concluded that schools should support children's natural inclination to develop and test hypotheses about the world around them. The development of thinking skills does not have to wait until students have mastered the basics; in fact, higher-order thinking and the mastery of knowledge are inextricably linked and mutually supportive.

These new insights have nourished such initiatives as the whole-language movement and cooperative learning. They have begun to transform classrooms in hundreds of schools across the nation.

But these more sensible approaches to teaching and learning are not likely to spread rapidly or endure for long if they are evaluated on the basis of student performance on standardized tests.

Teachers are in a quandary: they are urged to take risks and be innovative, but they know that their students will be judged on how well they score on tests that do not measure innovative teaching and learning.

... The recent explosion in standardized testing was triggered in the 1980s by the education reform movement's demand for greater accountability. To garner support for sweeping education initiatives and the bigger budgets needed to pay for them, lawmakers had to promise constituents that reforms would pay concrete dividends. Test scores, they said, would provide the proof.

Today, test scores are treated as if they were magic numbers. Newspapers rank schools and districts by their scores. Real estate agents pitch test scores to sell houses. Some districts have even fired school administrators because of test results.

Federal funding is often contingent on schools meeting and maintaining specific achievement levels. The research community also puts a high value on standardized tests; in fact, the bulk of education research is based on test score data.

... The Saturn faculty is reshaping the curriculum to match the standardized tests. For example, the school has abandoned the practice of teaching math through projects in other disciplines; now students are required to take traditional math classes that include drill and practice. And an innovative plan to create mentorships and internships that link students with members of the community has been pushed to the back burner. ...

Calendar

February 26-28, 1993: Oregon Mid-Winter Retreat for Homeschooling Moms at Breitenbush Hot Springs. For info: SASE to Oregon Home Education Network, 4470 SW Hall Blvd #286, Beaverton OR 97005; 503-238-1069.

Pat Farenga will be giving talks and selling books at the following events:

3/27: Maryland Home Education Association conference in Takoma Park, MD. For info: Manfred Smith, 410-730-0073.

4/3: Unschoolers Network conference in Princeton, NJ. For info: Nancy Plent, 908-938-2473.

5/7-8: North Carolinians for Home Education conference in Winston-Salem, NC. For info: Spencer Mason, 704-541-5145.

5/14-15: Homeschool Associates of New England conference in Danvers, MA. For info: 207-777-0077.

6/26: American Library Association conference in New Orleans, LA. For info: Susan Scheps, 216-991-2421.

We are happy to print announcements of major homeschooling events, but we need plenty of notice. Deadline for GWS #91 (events in March or later) is January 10th. Deadline for GWS #92 (events in May or later) is March 10th.

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Learning from Mistakes

Carolyn Ellis of Maryland writes:

Our oldest child, Mary, was 6 years old when we began homeschooling. Right away there were problems: an oldest child, a daughter, perfectionistic, independent - our own fresh page of birth order predispositions. It took Fred and me two years to basically get out of Mary's way so that she could get on with her own pursuits. Why did it take us two years? This was the child who was always asking to learn "hard things," who was always busy. In retrospect, it is perfectly clear that the problem was me. I had an inordinate amount of intellectual baggage to divest myself of before I could assent to giving Mary the freedom she deserved.

From the very beginning, Mary had resisted my teaching. This turned out to be providential, since my "benevolent dictator" teaching model was all wrong to begin with! Instead of fanning Mary's joy of learning into a flame, I saw that I was actually smothering it. As a benevolent dictator, I had tried to impose my structure and plan for learning on Mary. Though I was convinced that my way was eminently more efficient than Mary's way, the fact is that since my plan was openly rejected, it was rendered totally useless despite all its merits.

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Over time, I replaced the benevolent dictator model with a much healthier model, the partner/enabler model. Through trial and error, direct observation, and a great deal of thinking and reading (especially John Holt), I struggled to learn how to empower Mary to develop, as fully as possible, her own learning methodology. I learned to support and encourage interests, to explain or demonstrate when called upon, to answer questions when asked, to enable more meaningful experiences, to open up resources. From Alfred North Whitehead, the British mathematician and philosopher, I absorbed the additional wisdom of not pressing Mary for generalizations and conclusions when she was clearly not ready for them. In his *Aims of Education*, Whitehead speaks of a "stage of romance," a legitimate period of intoxication with a subject in all its newness and vividness. Fred and I wanted very much to protect this special stage of learning so that Mary's vigorous joy of life would not be hampered by the demands of a precision prematurely imposed. We agreed that there would be plenty of time for generalizations and conclusions when Mary's own developing intellect would naturally require them.

After I cleaned up my role as teacher, I still had more wrong-headed ideas that had to be abandoned in order for me to be able to help Mary in any significant way. ... This time, it was my idea that there was one universal curve of learning that could serve as a comparison model for any child's development. According to my curve, Mary was always a year or more "behind" in everything. I had to learn to accept and appreciate Mary's development as perfectly appropriate for her. When I stopped making comparisons, I began to enjoy Mary much more.

The next road block to homeschooling success was marked "Learning Styles" and "Temperaments." Again, I was the source of our problems in this area. Though Fred had a lot of understanding for Mary, having much in common with her in the areas of learning styles and temperament, he was at work all day. Meanwhile, before we gave Mary the freedom to make her own choices in this venture of homeschooling, I was still the teacher, still operating as a benevolent dictator, and had no understanding for Mary at all! It sounds confoundingly simple: every child is different and worthy of respect. But when you homeschool, this truism takes on a much broader application. For Mary and each successive child, Fred and I have come to understand that it is invaluable to identify each child's learning style, discovering in the process what is helpful for that particular child and what is not. Books about learning styles can be useful in decoding your children's styles of learning, but in the end it all comes down to observing them and taking the time to figure out how they like to do things. For example, Mary likes to work "top-down," from the global to the particular. Details are boring to her unless they are a necessary part of a more complex whole, hence her love of "hard things." She is also decidedly kinesthetic, a true do-er. She excels at gymnastics and loves crafts. To satisfy her logical mind and her delight in mulling over things, she also needs plenty of time to ponder and discover on her own.

Francis, our second child, has a completely different learning style. He likes to work "bottom-up," building the bigger picture from the delicious details that he delights in. As a retentive listener, Francis is constantly taking in raw data, thinking and talking all the time about what he has gathered through his listening. Logic is too slow for him. He favors intuition, speculation, and trial and error. He is gifted in music. The point is that there are a multitude of ways to approach learning. What could delight Mary would frustrate Francis and vice-versa. ...

Because of major differences in temperament, Mary and I were on another collision course. Fortunately, Fred intervened to point out to me that it is not enough to *identify* learning styles and temperaments; it is necessary to accept the child, and his or her style of learning and temperament, as worthy of respect. Let me add here in my own defense that by the time Francis was 4, I was able to help Fred accept and respect him for who he is and how he learns. It was easy for me to have an understanding for Francis because he and I have a lot in common. Unfortunately, Mary, as our oldest, and not like me at all, had to suffer through two years of my learning to understand and appreciate her.

It is interesting that, prior to homeschooling, I had recognized that before age 3, Mary did not like me to show her things (colors, letters, numbers). I discovered that it was all right to have materials around (posters, cards, letter magnets) and it was fine to answer questions, but by age 4 Mary was very clear about not teaching her anything: "This is not a game. You are trying to teach me something, aren't you?" I attempted to see that we had rich resources available to her, and then basically left direct teaching alone. Believe it or not, aside from this issue of academic teaching, Mary and I seemed to be doing fine, but when we began to homeschool, I figured that now I *have* to teach.

Today, after four years of homeschooling, we have reached a wonderful equilibrium. Two years ago we made a decision to give Mary the freedom to pursue her own serious interests. We have not been disappointed in our decision. Occasionally, Fred or I work with Mary on a specific skill for maybe thirty minutes. She is refreshingly open to our suggestions and directives. This year Mary has plunged into reading and writing with much gusto. She delights in the private joy that each of these activities brings her. From her love of mystery stories, she has begun to pursue science and math and "sort of like mysteries." She has become quite good at directing herself and developing meaningful options.

Homeschoolers of Color

The Discussion Continues

An Asian-American Family

Thelma Seto of California writes:

I am an Asian-American homeschooling parent. I am a single mother by choice, a poet/fiction writer who makes possible the homeschooling life with a combination of self-employment and living on a boat (cheap rent and terrific homeschooling environment). I get a lot of heat and befuddlement from my family and Asian friends because I homeschool. We - the Asian community - put a very high premium on education and on "achievement," so I am swimming against the tide (or floating on it, depending on your perspective). My son was identified as "highly gifted" the two brief years he was in public school, which adds to folks' mystification as to why I would homeschool. He would have been one of those over-achievers were he to attend public school. However, I am more interested in raising a child who has the tools for self-education than one who will impress the neighbors or college admissions staff. He was very bored in school; I also found the school environment unbearably emotionally abusive of children.

During our two years in public school and one year in a very alternative, supposedly "multi-cultural" private school, whose tuition very nearly broke my back, we came up against the ethnocentrism that threatens to kill this country. My son's kindergarten was in a school where most of the kids were non-white and most of the staff were of European extraction. They watched an American version of *Sesame Street* in the morning and an Israeli version in the afternoon. I was born in Syria and raised in Lebanon and Iran and viewed this very definitely as political indoctrination, which was not OK with me.

I moved my son into a gifted magnet program in an all-black neighborhood for first grade, where ethnocentrism was also a problem, this time from an African-American point of view. My son never saw his family's history or political/cultural/ethnic sensibility mirrored in the public school curriculum to any degree.

When he attended a pricy private school which took great pride in its support of multi-culturalism, I found him punished for behaving in culturally appropriate ways for him. Since we are a mixed-race family, of Japanese-Canadian and Anglo-American background genetically, with the adopted cultures of Syria, Lebanon, and Iran through my childhood experience, we don't fit into any neat, stereotypical categories. This broad-minded private school didn't know what to do with us. However, my son was fondly embraced by his native Iranian and native Japanese teachers as "a typical Iranian boy" and "a typical Japanese boy." The cross-cultural conflicts in that "liberal" environment really tipped me over into homeschooling, in addition to a whole host of disagreements I had with its educational and social philosophy.

Now I am (proud to be) part of a growing homeschooling movement that is mostly white, mostly middle/upper-middle class, 99% married couples with more than one child. I feel alienated sometimes, and frustrated, but the homeschooling movement still is more accepting of me than either public or private school systems were. Homeschoolers are a very homogenous group of people and I think the movement suffers for that.

I hope that homeschooling support groups will do more to welcome people who are culturally and racially different from themselves.

Because I am a politically aware writer living in the city of Los Angeles during this highly charged time, my son is learning about cultural diversity through my work. Because I am a single parent he comes with me to all my workshops, meetings, readings, performances, that my profession as a poet and writer involve. His choice of male role-models seem to be Asian-American actors.

Due to the riots in South Central and the way the Asian-American community has been hit in the past two years with rabid racism, mostly unreported by the press; my son has been in cross-ethnic meetings where African-American poets engage in screaming fights with native African poets; he's seen African-American poets who have more in common with me, his mixed-race Asian-American mom, than with African-American poets who live in their neighborhood. He's had a real education in racist struggles and how we are all affected by them. He's seen how speaking your mind and being precisely who you are all the time is essential to finding a common ground with those with whom you are in intense conflict. He has learned more about internalized racism among Americans of color than any textbook or school situation could teach him, including at the college level.

I think any child of color, however, learns certain political lessons just by being who he or she is. Education in America is different for all children of color from what it is for children of European descent. Our lives and consciousnesses are very different from those of our white counterparts. And that difference is intensely political. I expect that parents of color will eventually wake up and realize the tremendous clout they have in the educational system. Imagine if we pulled our kids out of the schools in organized droves! The whole system would fall apart. That is what may very well be in the cards here. The majority of kids still in the public school system here are non-white, which in itself is very political.

I hope other homeschoolers, especially white homeschooling families, make a concerted effort to deal with these realities with their children. I firmly believe that homeschooling, like writing, like having mixed-race children, is a radically political act. I also believe that children who are "schooled" are being robbed of their innate ability to deal with the political/social/racial issues that their generation will have to face or be destroyed by. If this country has any hope of dealing with the tremendous problems we face, a lot of the responsibility and promise is held in the hands and hearts and heads of our homeschooled children, who are still free to feel their own pain, to own their own perceptions, and to create their own cultural identities without the propaganda that schools of any description would inevitably ram down their throats.

I also hope that homeschooling support groups will do more to encourage and welcome people who are culturally and racially different from themselves, to see diversity as a chance to radically expand their own horizons and those of their children.

Sharing Information

From Donna Nichols-White of Washington:

One of the main problems for those of us who have been schooled is the separation of different races and ethnic groups. Many of us do not realize the major role education has played in pitting the many ethnic groups against each other.

Dale Vostitsanos was right in GWS #89 ["We Need All Perspectives"] when she said that the information about the history and culture of the African-American people should be shared. Many people don't believe that because school has brainwashed us into believing it is "us against them."

By the time parents of color decide to homeschool, they are usually very angry and hurt. They are removing themselves and their families from damaging situations. Some of the damage has been the assault on themselves as a people. They are leaving institutions that have told them not only that they were incompetent but that their incompetency is

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based on their race.

When they enter the homeschooling movement, in which they are unable to find others of similar backgrounds, it causes difficulties. They wonder, "Will this particular group really understand me?" or "Will I have to homeschool their way?" In other words, will they again be considered incompetent.

I understand how Crystal Watkins ["Are We Doing the Right Thing," GWS #89] feels unsure, even though at times her family is tranquil. I am glad when I reach people who have been ignored by the homeschooling movement, for I am able to identify with them. Many support groups and organizations consider themselves to be liberal but there is absolutely nothing in their library or resource department that relates to other ethnic groups.

I publish *The Drinking Gourd* in order to find the resources applicable to all homeschooling families. I doubt if there is any ethnic group that lacks information on the damaging effects of institutionalized schooling. I look for this information, ask others for it, find it, review it, and try to sell it through our mail-order bookstore. It is available to anybody who wants the information, for I know it is important to share it.

I have to admit that even I have been surprised at the number of African American, Native American, Jewish, Latino American, and Muslim families I have either received letters from or heard about. We homeschoolers are a varied lot! Maybe homeschooling offers us a chance to become a more understanding nation. Maybe by keeping our children out of school, we can become not just tolerant of each other (as the schools teach) but truly good friends.

Racism Among Homeschoolers

Kristin Cleage Williams (MI) wrote in GWS #88 that she sometimes perceived subtle racism in the homeschooling community. She now writes to expand upon this comment:

I do not think the homeschooling movement is unique in respect to racism, subtle or otherwise. It would be newsworthy if the movement was free of racism. I have attended several homeschooling conferences. I assume they were fairly typical of homeschooling conferences, based on what I have heard from others. There were no people of color facilitating any workshops. There was no material, aside from several books about American Indians in the distant past, in a workshop about teaching history through literature. There were few materials on sale that featured people of color. There were no history materials that did. There were quite a few people of color in attendance. Even if there had not been, why were there no books about people of color in the history workshop? Why didn't the facilitator know of any when asked? Why was she surprised to have anyone even ask?

The place of people of color in the history of this nation is not an insignificant tangent that we people of color need to know about to build up our self-esteem. We - Black, Native American, Chicano, Latino - were here long before most European Americans got off the boat. We *are* American history. To try to tell the story without us is myth making, not history. It is racism.

Perhaps those who plan conferences don't know any "qualified" people of color to facilitate workshops and, after all, these aren't conferences for people of color, they are for homeschoolers of all types. Well, why don't any people of color come to mind when conferences are being planned? Why aren't there any working with the homeschooling groups that plan these conferences? Why does a special effort have to be made to locate homeschoolers of color? Why, in the last few weeks, have I received several requests to locate homeschoolers of color for people doing news stories, because no one near them knows any? Because of racism.

Racism is why most white homeschoolers don't know *any* people of color, let alone homeschoolers of color. Racism is why there are none in your neighborhood, none on your job, and none on your bookshelves. Racism is why it seems normal to have all white folks in charge - and often in attendance. Racism is why mostly white resources are available. Racism is why it seems hostile for me to suggest otherwise. It is not because we are not here. We are. It is not because there are no histories written by all varieties of people of color. There are. It is not because these materials are not available. They are.

If you are interested in learning more, don't wait for us to do your homework. If you live in or near a large city, there are Black bookstores, feminist bookstores, and bookstores around college campuses. Ask at your library for books, booklists, lists of publishers of color. If they don't have any, ask why and ask them to get some. Write or visit the Black, Latino, Asian, and Native American Studies departments of your state universities or other colleges that may be near you. Ask for book lists. Ask about programs they may sponsor during the year. There are many centers around the country that specialize in the various aspects of our histories, cultures, and literatures. Find them. Buy newspapers and magazines published by people of color.

If you are part of an organization that has conferences for homeschoolers, ask them to have a workshop on resources in the history, culture, literature, and music of people of color, preferably chaired by a person or several people of color. If you attend a conference where people of color are not given a place, ask why. With all the reading and research you will have done, you will be able to share the information they are missing.

For addresses of *The Drinking Gourd* and *Umoja•Unidad•United*, two newsletters for and about homeschoolers of color, see our list of National/General Homeschool Groups, p. 37 of this issue.

An Adult Teaches Herself

Elsa Haas (Spain) writes:

I'm celebrating my fifth anniversary of living and working here (giving private English lessons mostly for adults, translating, and doing occasional interpreting work for companies). It isn't necessary to have a college degree to do the work I do. I left college after three years, when I went to work at Holt Associates. I remember that my advisor at College of the Atlantic, a very alternative and unusual place, told me that if I wanted to teach English in a foreign country someday, I would have to have not only a Bachelor's degree, but probably also a Master's degree in teaching English as a Foreign Language. Now, that may be true for public school teaching (in the fall I often get desperate calls from private schools searching for natives), but who would want to teach in a school, public or private, anyway? Not me!

The English teaching I do is morally acceptable to me only because I'm able to refuse students who don't come to me through their own decision (that rules out almost all kids). When an adult calls asking what I charge, I ask first whether the classes are for that person. If they're for a child or teenager I explain that I normally don't accept students of this age because they're usually pressured into it. This always meets with a baffled, "Como?" When my Spanish was still very limited, I thought I just wasn't using the right words, but now that I'm fluent I know that no matter how I express this, I will always have to repeat it, and then refuse again when the parent says, "My child doesn't really like to study, but he knows that English is very important, and besides, the school..." I've thought about putting an age limitation in the ad, but I think I may be having some influence on a few people by baffling them in this way, and I also keep hoping that someday, some family will be different.

A friend here once insisted that if I wanted to be a translator, the only thing I could do would be to go study translating at some kind of school. I told him that if I wanted to learn to translate, I could ask at one of those schools for a list of books recognized as good translations, and try translating parts of them, comparing my translations to the professional ones. This idea dates back to Holt Associates, where I used to take time off work to try translating parts of John Holt's books and compare them to the published French and Spanish editions (I'd studied three years of high school French and one trimester of college French, and two trimesters of college Spanish).

This pastime actually got me my first paid translating work, before I ever came to Europe, when Donna Richoux mentioned that her husband sometimes needed someone to do rough translations of articles on crocodiles. With a dictionary, I took this on, earning less than minimum wage at first but then going a little faster as the words on the list I'd looked up began repeating themselves. It's strange that a lot of people would never consider earning less than the minimum wage while learning something, but would readily shell out enormous amounts of money to be taught it.

In Spain, I never did actually "study" translating - not even on my own - but I became good enough at it to get private clients in the same way that I have learned almost all my Spanish: by living here, and by reading a fair amount. Co-translating the first issue of *Aprender Sin Escuela* (Spanish-language GWS) taught me a lot, too, but the learning was just the byproduct of a purposeful activity. In fact, I might describe the production of that issue as a subsidized course in translating, computers, layout, Spanish governmental bureaucracy, and small business management. All course materials and even a fair amount of my time have by now been paid back through sales.

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Challenges & Concerns

Coping With Doubts

Ken Lipman-Stern of New Jersey writes:

OK, I admit it. Sometimes I shake in my shoes over our decision to homeschool. I wish it were different, that I had my arms spread wide and extended with acceptance. My wife and I have had long, hard discussions about our relatively new choice (our oldest would be in first grade this year). When I'm feeling confident, it's great. I agree with everything expressed by the philosophy of GWS and child-led learning.

I'm the adult in charge during the morning. My boys, Sam (6) and Jonah (3), have discussions over breakfast about what to do that day. I listen to their ideas, have some of my own, and praise and enjoy the process of coming up with an interesting idea of what we can do. On these mornings things seem to flow as one idea and project gives birth to another: the kids are breaking up stones, or we're making a pinata for Sam's birthday party, or reading and discussing *Little House on the Prairie*. My wife's been working on drawing letters with Sam in the afternoons and we're approaching reading slowly and in different ways. Sam loves nature and we hike in our woods, and Jonah toddles along looking for worms.

We're part of a homeschooling group, but the group has a majority of girls and the boys are older than ours. There is our first problem. We live in an apartment complex with a horde of boys and girls who have been telling Sam that he won't learn anything at home, that he should be going to school. Hearing that mantra without also having a homeschooling buddy has resulted in Sam's feeling ashamed of his homeschooling status. It's only a couple of weeks into the school year and Sam doesn't want us to say homeschooling out loud when we are outside. This attitude is recent (a couple of days old). A scene: we are walking toward the woods with an older homeschooler, Amber (10), in the middle of the day. As we pass other adults (strangers), Sam runs into the shadows of bushes and cars so he will not be seen. I was concerned and asked him why he was doing this. He embarrassedly told me that because kids are in school during the day, he doesn't want to be seen.

We talked later that day about his feelings and our decision to homeschool and that many people we know are different: "Tova is kosher and cannot eat three quarters of the food in most people's houses; Vladi is Russian and speaks with an accent and wears shoes other kids make fun of." I said we can be proud of our differences. I spoke of my pride about our decision to homeschool, said that we are doing many interesting things, that I'm a homeschooler too and love learning with the family. I said it's an experiment and worth our while. I later talked openly about my ambivalence, and that is problem #2.

It really broke my heart to see Sam run from shadow to shadow, feeling ashamed of walking to the woods in the middle of the day. I spent my own childhood feeling at times sorely inadequate and shamed. In my moments of insecurity, it pains me to see Sam like that.

Also, the clean slate each morning - me and the kids with time to fill - worries me. I want to provide them with an experience that is as good as school. This, during my down time, is a scary challenge. I sense Sam's, "Why aren't I participating in everyone's common experience?" and that sounds loud in my mind.

I wish I were convinced: it would make it so much easier. And I recognize the fact that while Sam's friends are in school, he turns to his younger brother and they play together, sometimes cooperatively and lovingly. I recognize that when I'm open to the flow, sometimes magical moments occur: a lively discussion over breakfast about the afterlife that would not occur if Sam were rushed off to school each day. I recognize that Sam's best friend, who is 9, has not been out to play for days because of being saddled with homework that deprives him of play time, that invalidates play.

My wife and I are trying to think through all these issues, to use them as learning experiences, and I am trying to embrace the struggle. But we could use the input of other homeschooling parents whose children are close friends with many mainstream children.

Difficulties Between Child and Parent

A reader writes:

In response to "When Child and Parent Don't Get Along," (GWS #89), I have some comments, although not necessarily answers. My oldest child (of 5) is now 14, so any time I try to talk to someone, our problem is shrugged off with "He's a teenager." This is frustrating because the problem didn't develop due to his age. He has always been extremely independent and strong willed, and very different from any of his siblings at any given age. Of course, the other comment I get is, "Send him to school."

I firmly believe a problem within a family must be dealt with. As parents, we must be open enough to look at ourselves and what we are expecting from our child. Are we caught up in trying to control too much - is it a power struggle? Are we resentful of the demands of being there - or maybe burnt out because we aren't taking care of our own needs? Do we feel too responsible for our child's success - under scrutiny from friends and family wanting us to prove that we're not harming our child? Are we putting too much pressure on this young person to perform?

I did succumb to pressure from my husband to send our son to school. Our son wanted to go, and enjoyed it for the first few months. For the most part, though, our relationship didn't improve, and I feel it actually deteriorated. With pressure to get moving on time in the morning, the hours consumed by being in school and the additional hours of homework, the fatigue and frustration the whole situation puts on a child - suffice it to say, we had very little positive time together. Most of the small amount of time we had to share seemed to be a concentration of all the negativity he couldn't express at school.

One thing my dad says has helped me through this: "Let them let their hair down at home." His philosophy is that it's better to vent your anger, frustration, etc. in the privacy and safety of your own home than to vent it anywhere else. And it's so much better to have a child who feels free to express himself at home than for him to feel a need to get it off his chest in an inappropriate manner and place.

I don't know if my son and I will ever really get along well. We do have some good times, but I hope for more. I see homeschooling as the perfect opportunity for working on this kind of problem rather than ignoring it and ending up so distant that we don't even communicate once he's grown and on his own.

I'd like to hear more on this subject. I see many similar situations, but many parents (I think homeschoolers especially) are reluctant to admit to having such a problem.

How a Single Parent Homeschools

Victoria Moran (MO) writes:

As a homeschooling single parent, I sometimes feel that I'm juggling several dozen balls, but homeschooling is seldom a troublesome one; in fact, it is the one I always seem to catch, the one that makes juggling the others (and sometimes dropping them) worth it.

I am lucky enough to be able to work at home as a writer and to do some traveling and lecturing. Homeschooling makes the traveling possible for us since I can bring Rachael, now age 9, with me. This has been a marvelous opportunity for her to learn and grow, although she is at a place now where she has had enough for a while and prefers staying home.

My work has always been like a sibling for Rachael, I think. When I have deadlines, I'm glued to the computer - paying attention to the "other kid." Rachael can be really self-directed and can occupy herself with amazingly creative and clever projects - building a car from a cardboard box, writing songs, making a jewelry box

for herself or Christmas stockings for her cats - but I regret that when she was younger I was too concerned about making a living and gave working too high a priority.

I spent two years working on a book, *The Love-Powered Diet*, as if it were the most important undertaking on earth. Somehow I thought that if I worked hard enough on that book, it would be a raving bestseller and I could take a few years off just to be with Rachael. That didn't happen. It's a fine book, but it did not set the world on fire. I still have to work, but I don't have to work with such intensity. I prefer to live according to my true priorities: my child first, my work second (or sometimes third - a radical admission in this society, I realize!).

Now that we've homeschooled for four years and I've freelanced for five, I'm finally realizing that enough work always comes, it always gets done, and the bills always get paid. Our society gives work for pay a much higher value than work for love - i.e. mothering and homeschooling. As a single parent especially, I've felt that making a living was the most important thing I could do for my child. It isn't. Most important is making a life. A lot of my feverish work was, I see now, not so much to make money as to prove my worth. Today I feel much more worthy to work at a softer pace and treat my professional life as I treat my daughter's academic life - as an adventure, not a chore.

When it comes to homeschooling practicalities, having a basic schedule is helpful. I'm not a scheduled sort of person and neither is my daughter, but we both understand that I work in the mornings and we "do school" in the afternoons. That does not always mean sitting down for specific academics, although some of our most pleasant times are precisely those, but afternoons may be homeschool gatherings, classes, or field trips, or Rachael's mother's helper job where she plays with a toddler two hours a week while his mother has some free time around the house. We don't have a traditional September-June school year, so we meet our state's requirements for 1000 hours of school a year by having the full year to do it, as well as any time of day and any day of the week.

Both Rachael and I have a great many friends, homeschoolers and otherwise. Being single rarely impedes this, although at times in some homeschool groups - those that are heavily Fundamentalist Christian - I get the impression, perhaps erroneously, that we're seen as not quite a family. There appears to be the implication that it must be through some flaw on my part that some man has not come along to marry me and give us the mom/dad/kid configuration that would make others comfortable. I think sometimes single-parent families seem frightening - you know: "It might happen to me." But people who know us well tell me often what a truly enviable life we have: I work for myself, Rachael learns for herself, we have traveled over a good bit of the earth, and we have a sweet, safe haven at home. If it gets any better than this, you could have fooled me.

Help from Another Mom

Debbie Westheimer (OH) writes:

One feature of GWS that I have read with particular interest is how moms have found ways of giving themselves more time to do things that they hope to accomplish. I have four children, ages 12, 9, 6, and almost 2. I already use the older ones to accomplish daily tasks such as meal preparation and clean up. We all take turns either making the meal or playing with Eva, the 2 year old.

I didn't feel I could ask the older children to take care of Eva while I made phone calls or filed papers or paid bills. Eva is quite demanding, and I can't talk on the phone with her there or read aloud to the other kids or accomplish much of anything in her presence. My husband was willing to give me two hours a day to do these things but his schedule is unpredictable; he's sometimes out of town or out of the house working on a project. So I came up with a schedule that is working fairly well right now. I get up in the morning at 6:00 and spend two hours in my office. Dick starts the day with the kids. I take over at 8:00. These two hours are great, but I found I really needed more time. Also, I can't make calls this early in the morning.

In August, I put an ad in the paper looking for a person to come to my home for two hours a day to watch Eva. I hired another mom named Vicki who comes with her 4 year old three afternoons a week. I really enjoy the break, and I don't feel so anxious about getting everything done. I am not caught up with everything, and I may have to accept that I never will be, but I am pleased to see the light. I have used Vicki at times to be with the older kids or take them on an outing without Eva. We all welcome the extra hands on deck.

One thing I make sure of before I go into my office and close the door is that the older children have a sense of choices of how to spend their time. We make a list of individual plans and farm work. Hannah (6) has a picture chart to remind herself of activities she likes.

Vicki has freed us all up to spend more time on other projects. This has made me realize how odd it is that we have formed such small nuclear families that are supposed to support us. How wise the phrase, "It takes a whole tribe/village to raise one child." I'm grateful for Vicki's help.

Rethinking ADHD

Shari Henry (MN) writes:

Bekah (3 1/2) is the kind of child who has a hard time walking straight from the front door of the house to the car when we're headed outside to run errands. As a matter of fact, I don't believe she's ever done it. She always finds a bug that needs to be picked up, a plant that intrigues her,

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or some piece of absolute junk she treasures.

Watching my frustration level rise at times, well-meaning friends assure me that someday she'll be able to focus better. In many ways, for the sake of our getting along, I hope that's so.

In the meantime, I've had the privilege of watching my nephew, Brian, reach the age of 10 in much the same way. Family members (especially us two moms) often see amazing similarities between Brian and Bekah. Watching my sister's laid-back approach in allowing Brian's incredible mind to work his way has given me the ability to see that the way these two kids operate is no less valid than any other way.

Brian was labeled ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) at the ripe old age of 6. Rather than putting him on Ritalin and letting the school officials take over, my sister researched (learning about Holt Associates and GWS in the process), dug, and eventually found a school where the way Brian learned was deemed worthy of respect.

I would guess that the experts would label Bekah the same someday, though I'll never have the opportunity to find out. The most interesting thing is that though these children may have a hard time focusing on what others deem important (whether it be hurrying to the car or reading), they have the uncanny ability to focus more intently than most children on many things.

As we gathered at my parents' house this summer, I was barraged with requests to help cook on the nights that I was responsible for meals. Because I can't stand a crowded kitchen and only want help that is helpful, I explained to the children that I would prefer to have one helper each night rather than all of them at once. That was agreeable and so it went, until Brian's turn.

Brian and my son TJ (7) are virtually inseparable. I realized I'd either be coming up with silly things for one of them to do or allowing them to prepare the enchiladas on their own. I opted for the latter.

I asked them to begin grating cheese while I put the kitchen in order. It wasn't long before TJ became bored. I told him he could fry the tortillas, but I would have to be nearby because of the hot oil.

Brian didn't mind grating a bit. He delighted in having the job to himself.

How fascinating, I thought. I never could have made it through three pounds of cheese without going crazy.

Once the initial preparations were done, I set up an assembly line. After watching a couple of times to be sure the enchiladas were filled appropriately and rolled tightly, I was no longer needed and left the room.

The boys had a blast, pretending to be chefs appearing on a television show. I was free to do anything I wanted.

Dinner was wonderful and they rightfully took all the credit. Both were thrilled with their end products and I pondered how a 10 year old and a 7 year old had stuck with a tedious project for two and a half hours.

A month or so later, back in Minnesota, we returned home one afternoon with a bag full of freshly picked apples. We all agreed on apple cobbler for dessert. By the time it came to make it, I was exhausted but began preparing the topping. Bekah ran in to help. Actually, she didn't want to help, she wanted to do it all by herself. So I lined up the ingredients, set her high on a chair by the counter, gave her clear instructions, and retreated to cut apples. I specified that the shortening had to be cut into the flour to form tiny balls, like peas. I figured she'd give up in a few minutes.

Other than occasionally calling me to see if the balls were small enough, Bekah didn't ask for any help. She finished the topping all by herself, which took about 45 minutes. I was able to have the apples sliced, cooked, and ready for the oven by the time she was done. As I shut the oven door, Bekah exclaimed, "We did it!"

Sometimes I worry that if we just allow children to focus on what interests them, we encourage selfishness. For my sanity, I need some compromises. I want Bekah to walk straight to the car and I prefer that Brian look me in the eye when I speak with him.

But to focus on changing these kids is twisted. If Brian's "time on task" in school was measured by his ability to spend time grating cheese or creating Lego monstrosities, my guess is he'd never have been labeled ADHD in the first place. And I don't know that many 3 year olds would stick with cutting shortening into flour until it met the demands of a perfectionist mother.

While all children (and adults) need to learn the art of compromise to get along with and be respectful of others, schools place too much emphasis not on that but on specific skills arbitrarily deemed more important than others. And, even in "getting along," (that is, hurrying to the car), why is it that, more often than not, we ask these kids to make the compromises rather than being more willing to do so ourselves?

I think I'll start leaving the house five or ten minutes earlier, if it means Bekah can check out the bugs and plants.

Watching Children Learn

Studying Birds

Bridget Fitzpatrick of Maryland writes:

I was recently in a program called Feeder Watch, organized by Cornell University. It requires a fee of approximately $15 to cover data processing. We sent away in August, received our package in September, and started the bird watch in October. Every week we picked two or three days to record what birds were using the feeder or were in the yard. At the end of each month we totalled our information and filled out a computer survey. I saw 24 different species. We were surprised at how many species came to a small yard in District Heights. We also recorded factors like cats in the yard.

We tried a scarecrow dummy sitting in a chair near the feeder. The birds got used to it and came anyway. Then we put seed on the scarecrow's hat and lap. Mainly just sparrows were brave enough to eat the seed. My sister and I tried dressing in the scarecrow's outfit and sitting in the chair. I sat for twenty or thirty minutes and only a few birds came to the area. None landed on me.

Our Feeder Watch records lasted from October to May. If anybody is interested in this, write Project Feeder Watch, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Rd, Ithaca NY 14850.

My dad's a naturalist and he works at a nature center. They coordinate Bluebird Box monitoring with volunteers every year. My family monitored about 25 boxes from April to August. You look in the box and see if there is a nest and then write it down. Sometimes we called it the Earwig Trail because the boxes were empty except for Earwigs.

We also built kestrel boxes for the nature center's use. A kestrel is a small falcon who lives in cavities. There are fewer and fewer of them, so the Audubon Society is funding a project for their housing. The box looks like a rather small bluebird box.

This year I hope to go hawk banding with my dad.

Interested in the Middle Ages

Andrea Quarracino of Pennsylvania writes:

One of my interests is archery. I have never had professional archery lessons, but my dad has taught me how to shoot small distances in our back yard with my brother's safe metal-tipped arrows. I am not very good at target shooting, but I enjoy it.

Part of why I like archery and fencing is because I have a lot of interest in knights and the Middle Ages. I think that might be my favorite part of history. I think my brother was the one who started my interest in the Middle Ages. He was always begging me to sword fight with him and stuff like that. Then I saw the movie *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, and after that I think I read everything I could get my hands on about Robin Hood and the Middle Ages. Since last summer, we have visited the Philadelphia Art Museum to see the arms and armor, and I have read up on it a lot. I really enjoyed some fictional books by Tamora Pierce - The Song of the Lionness series. The first one is about a girl from the Middle Ages who runs away to be a knight. I now write to Tamora Pierce - we are pen-pals, you could say.

Another of my interests is writing. I basically explore it on my own, but I will be taking a creative writing class this fall, and last year I had a writing group at my house. We each took turns reading our stories out loud, and then we told each other what we thought of each other's stories, how they might be made clearer, with better grammar, etc. I felt a little embarrassed reading my stories aloud, but it was good to hear what other people felt about my work. I generally have my mom look over my writing material, too. She helps correct spelling, and tells me if there's something she doesn't understand.

My big news about my writing is that I recently entered one of my poems in a contest sponsored by the National Library of Poetry, and I made it into the semi-finals. The final competition will be held in the spring, with the chance to win $1000 as the grand prize. Also, the judges liked my poem so much that it is going to be in their book titled *Where Dreams Begin*. It will be my first publication. I'm really excited!

...and in the American Revolution

Avtar Sheppard-Singh of New Jersey writes:

I've loved the American Revolution since I was 7. Now I'm 10. So far I've learned a lot. Now I'm interested in historical fiction. I looked through several libraries. There are a lot of really good books about the Revolution.

When I was younger, the Jean Fritz biographies, such as *Why Don't You Get a Horse, Sam Adams*, were my favorites. Now I like more complex books like *Sergeant Lamb's America* and *Proceed Sergeant Lamb* by Robert Graves, and *Private Yankee Doodle* by J.P. Martin. Sergeant Lamb is a fictional story told by a British soldier, and J.P. Martin was really a continental soldier. Another good book is *Traitor: The Case of Benedict Arnold* by Jean Fritz.

This summer I went to an historical re-enactment of the Battle of Petticoat Bridge in Columbus, NJ. This was a trick played on the Hessians to draw soldiers away from Trenton. When I'm 14 I think I will join a regiment of Revolutionary War re-enactors. I've already gone to lots of Revolutionary sites such as Morristown and Yorktown. We spent four days in Williamsburg, VA.

Now I'm getting interested in presidents. A good book is *Hail to the Chiefs* by Barbara Holland. It's funny.

I'm really interested in all this and it has been really fun to learn.

When Waiting Was the Right Thing

Marian Bever (IN) writes:

I want to share two examples from our family where waiting has been a good thing. When our children were younger (5 and 8 or so), we lived in the city and belonged to the local YMCA. We enrolled the children in swimming lessons there. I don't recall this as being a particularly bad experience, though our younger son really didn't like the water. When we moved to the country five years ago, we dropped our membership at the Y. A year ago (the boys were then 10 and 13) a friend asked me whether I would be interested in swimming lessons for my children. She has a friend who is an experienced swim teacher and is very caring and concerned with children who fear the water.

By this time my thought was that all the older boy needed was time in the water and he would learn to swim, but the younger one had developed a fear of putting his face in the water and needed more help than I would be able to give. We signed up. The lessons took place in a backyard pool. This woman was a marvel! I had hoped that by the end of the week, D. would feel comfortable putting his face in the water. He did that by the end of the first day! By the end of the week, he was floating and enjoying himself. M., my older son, learned to swim with rotary breathing during this time.

In the fall, we joined the YWCA and had a series of lessons there, in small groups, with another woman who was also very good. Both boys made good progress. The YWCA does not offer more advanced classes, however, so this summer we joined the YMCA. M. has had one series of lessons there and D. has had two, and they are both competent swimmers now. This has taken about a year. I have observed younger children who have taken lessons for years and do not swim as well as our boys.

I think the lesson for me has been that, as in many other areas, children are ready for various skills at different ages.

There is a certain amount of strength and coordination involved in swimming and I think a child may not make much progress until that has developed - at whatever age. Some children may take to swimming very young; others simply do not feel comfortable working at it until their feet can touch the bottom of the pool at the shallow end. The point is, it is not too late to begin, even if you are an adult.

I think the swimming experience has been a success story for us. We are still in the beginning stages of the music story, so we will have to wait for the concluding chapters, but I am encouraged by our beginning. Both boys started piano lessons this spring. They were almost 11 and almost 14 at the time. I had been in despair about music. D. had joined an area children's choir, and had expressed some interest in piano lessons, but M. had shown no interest at all. Finally we decided that both boys would take piano lessons for a while and see how things went. What a surprise! M. finished the first Suzuki book is less than three months, and is about half way through book 2. D. finished book 1 in about three months and has started in book 2. I have requested that they practice thirty minutes a day – preferably with me to prevent their learning things incorrectly and having to unlearn them. M. almost always spends another thirty minutes practicing on his own. D. is less systematic, but also spends extra time practicing. I don't think they would play on their own unless they enjoy it.

I started piano lessons when I was 5. My memory tells me that it took me ages to make progress. As I look back I wonder whether I would have been better off to have waited until my hands were bigger and my coordination better. I certainly don't think children have to start that young to be good. I am confident that my boys are doing well at least partly because they are older. They have had more exposure to mathematics and patterns than the average 5 year old. M. has shown great interest in the various keys and has worked out "Go Tell Aunt Rhody" in all the keys. He figured out the pattern of whole steps and half steps for the major scales by looking at the pattern for the C major scale. He then went on to figure out the scales for all the other keys. He knows how to form triads and how to find the other inversions of the chords. All of this is sure to help him as he plays. I am sure I did not learn these things until many years after I had started lessons. He has the maturity, pattern knowledge, curiosity, and time to figure these things out for himself. I'm very pleased that the boys are able to move along so quickly, because I think they are less likely to burn out. I was afraid I had waited too long to get them started. Not so! It has turned out to be a good time.

There has been less TV since we began the piano lessons. I have noticed that the boys often play the piano for short periods of time when they are waiting for supper to be ready, when they are waiting for somebody to finish a project so they can play a game together, etc. They also listen to the Suzuki tapes while they are playing board games or cards. Playing the piano doesn't require assembling equipment or clean-up afterwards. I think that is why it appeals to them as a "waiting time" activity.

I am actively involved in these piano lessons and I suspect that this has helped them to move along fairly quickly. In fact, I started taking piano lessons again this summer myself. I am not a beginner, but they hear me working out difficult spots by playing them over and over.

Teaching Himself to Program

Jill Boone (CA) writes:

Paul (12) recently decided he wanted to learn to program in Hypercard, something I certainly don't know anything about. He had learned a few tricks from a friend and had played around with that, but suddenly he got serious about his goal. I offered to find him a mentor, probably the path I would have chosen, but he insisted that he wanted a book or something so he could teach himself. After a couple of tries from the library including a video tape, he was again at a dead end. So his father took him to the Stanford Technical Bookstore and left him to pick out what he wanted. He chose a book which laid everything out in a tutorial, and he took it home and spent hours carefully going through it. I don't know if he ever finished it or whether he satisfied his interest or is just on a break, but I have a great deal of respect for his understanding of what works best for him.

Doesn't Like Quizzing

Gail Sichel (NJ) writes:

Although Corianna (6) said she wanted to work on her reading skills this summer, we did very little. I had been quizzing her on chapter headings and getting frustrated with her not wanting to read or even seemingly to try. I was not enjoying the process either. Then one day I decided to stop quizzing her. I apologized to her for trying to force her, told her I'd stop, and she accepted the apology and was glad I'd stop.

She has subsequently chosen three Ladybird books and is working on teaching herself the words using repetition and memory of the story. Again, a reminder to me that the river does not need pushing! We were visiting some friends and watched them play a spelling game. Each person has to give the next person a word beginning with the last letter of the previous word. Corianna watched, caught the drift of the game, and then tried it at home with her father and me. We've enjoyed the game a number of times, and I'm amazed at all that has come from such a simple game. One time Corianna went to get the dictionary. From that she's learned to use the dictionary better and is working on finding where a letter is in the alphabet. Phonics, something we've never formally approached, is falling into place. Her vocabulary is growing, she is beginning to understand spelling a bit, she's visualizing words and sounds, and she's having fun.

Well, of course Amarynth (3) is not to be left out, so even though she can't spell, if I whisper my word to her to give to Corianna, she has a role, too. Her vocabulary is growing, I'm sure, and she's talking about spelling. It comes out in her play with her little people, and she's very interested in spelling her name and enjoys recognizing the letters when she sees them - in headlines, on the dishwasher label, etc.

Making Friends is *Easier* Outside of School

Robert Jeffrey of Arkansas writes:

I don't think that it is one bit harder to socialize in home school than in formal school. I even think it's better in home school. I just moved to Arkansas from New Mexico, so now I have to make some friends. My brother started public school and didn't make any friends. However, I joined a soccer team and have started a few good friendships. I'm also going to join a theater workshop. I love to cartoon so I'll take some cartooning courses at the community college, too. And thanks to GWS I now write to Geoffrey Litwack, a fellow homeschooler, who I read about in GWS.

I might also get into the youth orchestra here. Plus I'm planning to bike across America and back for a school project. I'm going to volunteer at a bike shop to learn how to make repairs on bikes. As I write all of this down I think of all the poor kids in school who will be doing plain old work while I'm in Arizona somewhere riding a bike cross country.

Friends Through Newsletter

A few months ago, Evelyn Mead of Singapore sent us a copy of a letter she had sent out to other homeschoolers:

I am interested in setting up a pen-pal group newsletter for older homeschoolers. I am an American living in Singapore. I am 12 years old, and I know NOBODY who is a homeschooler. I looked in *Growing Without Schooling* magazines 84 and 85. I am writing the people 11 years or older who advertised for pen-pals. I thought you might like to be a part of the newsletter, HPG (Homeschooler's Pen-pal Group).

I am giving everyone a copy of this letter. I will see how many people write back, and then I will put the first issue together.

I thought it would be nice if we had the same group of people. That way we would all know each other. Instead of writing to one pen-pal, you can write to several people that all know each other, and you can do it in one letter. You will receive at least twice as many letters as you write. You can also write letters outside of the newsletter.

One thing that is good is that we all live in different parts of the world, and the news will be well rounded. I know that I

can't meet you, but just to be able to write to some people who are homeschoolers would help me a lot. The first issue will be about ourselves, and getting to know each other.

I went to private and public schools till the 4th grade in Seattle, Washington, and I have been homeschooling for two years while traveling. I have been to many different countries. Last year I sold my house and went around the world in 12 months. I have been to all the countries in Western Europe except Belgium, Portugal, and Norway. I have also been to Hungary, Turkey, India, Nepal Malaysia, Indonesia (Bali), Philippines, and Singapore.

I have signed up for Japanese and French as part of my homeschooling. It takes up most of my time. The main Japanese class I take meets on Sundays for 3 hours straight. It has 90 students who are mainly adults. ...

I have been taking French for longer than Japanese, so it is more natural for me. I go for two hours on Saturdays with a 10 minute break. ...

In my spare time I like to sew, act, read, write, swim, and play tennis, violin, and piano. I take tap dancing once a week from a Chinese lady, and gymnastics three times a week from a Singaporean and a Canadian man.

Please write and tell me if you are interested in a Homeschooler's Pen-pal group. Tell me about yourself, your local area, your hobbies, your style of homeschool, and much more that will contribute to introducing yourself.

Evelyn has since put out two issues of her newsletter. The kids have written about books they like, foreign languages they are studying, other activities they are involved in. Evelyn says that the newsletter is now open to others besides the original group, and her address is 7 Siglap Rd #23-54, Mandarin Gardens, Republic of Singapore 1544. We'd like to hear about any other homeschoolers who start newsletters as a way of dealing with geographic isolation.

Finding Kindred Spirits

Shannon Stoney (TN) writes:

When I read Serena Gingold's letter in GWS #88 about her efforts to find teenaged friends with whom she has something in common, I was reminded of how difficult it was for me to find friends at her age, even though I was in school. I was really different, too. Serena speculates that she's different because she's homeschooled and "cares about things other than what's happening in school." But I think she'd probably be different even if she were in school. She'd still be bored by all that talk about who likes who, what brand name of clothes you're wearing, etc.

I went to a sort of exclusive private girls' school. You had to be "smart" to get in, but I don't remember that anybody seemed very smart or, at least, very interested in the things I thought about, like politics or God. It was 1968. Goodness knows there was a lot to think about! The public schools had just been desegregated for the first time, people had older brothers in Viet Nam, our parents were terrified of us and of all the changes happening around us. I was burning up with questions about all this. But there was a sort of conspiracy of silence that hung over our teachers and parents. The only place where we could kind of talk about the interesting stuff was at our church youth group, which as a result got branded as a dangerous hippie organization, and sometimes my sister and I weren't allowed to go to it.

All this is to say that being in school doesn't solve the problem of finding interesting people to talk to. I didn't find those people until I left home to go to college. Now I live near a rural Southern town, and it might seem that I would feel isolated and lonely again. But now that I'm a grown-up, it's easier for me to find people I love to be with, maybe because I can drive and live where I want to. Also, staying in one place for a long time enables you to find people you love. I've been here about ten years, but for the first couple of years I was sort of lonesome. There are wonderful, interesting people everywhere, but sometimes it takes time to find them.

Even if homeschooled kids sometimes feel lonesome now, I think they should not lose heart. When they get older and can move around more easily on their own, they'll meet their soul mates.

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FOCUS: Creative Solutions

What happens when you want to do something, but there are logistical problems — maybe it's too expensive, or it isn't available in your area? We asked several young GWS readers to tell us about the creative solutions they and their families have found to problems like these.

Helps 4-H Leader in Exchange for Riding Lessons

From Grace Ritter (NY):

I wanted a horse and riding lessons but my parents said we didn't have enough money and I didn't know how to take care of horses. We did look in the newspaper for riding lessons, but everything was too expensive, or I was too young, or the lessons were part of a camp where I would have to be away for five weeks.

When I mentioned my problem to my 4-H leader, she told me that her daughter had worked with one of our other 4-H leaders and got riding lessons in exchange. She suggested I ask about doing the same thing.

I talked to that 4-H leader, and I now apprentice with her. She is a dog warden (a dog warden goes and picks up dogs that have been mistreated or are lost). I work one day a week. I take care of her animals: dogs, goats, cows, cats, a bunny, and horses. In return, I get riding lessons and I am learning about caring for horses. I've also always wanted a dog, so I am learning about caring for dogs, too.

Earning Money for Quilting Class

From Mia Morales (NC):

I am interested in quilting. One day I went to our local farmer's market and there was a lady there quilting. Her quilts were beautiful. My mom asked her if she would be interested in bartering, so I could learn quilting. My mom's idea was that if the lady had children, I could babysit her kids in exchange for quilting lessons. But she said no.

A few weeks later, when we went to the farmer's market again, one of our friends who sells bread said she was going to take a quilting class from the same lady. So my mom and I asked the quilting lady if I could take the class. She said I could, but it costs $60 and all the other people in it would be adults. I didn't mind that they were adults, and I'm going to babysit a lot so that I can earn money to take the class and my mom won't have to pay.

Finding an Archaeological Dig

From Eric Thorner (NY):

At the Museum of Natural History in New York City, I did "sandbox archaeology" and it was really exciting, but it wasn't as good as a real archaeological dig. I really wanted to go on a dig. I told my mother and she tried her best to find one in our area. She called museums in Long Island and New York City and they said there were no digs going on anywhere in Long Island or the metropolitan area.

About six months later, we went to a local county fair, and one of the displays was on archaeology. We asked about it and found out that there was a dig going on in Pot Cove in Astoria, which is in Queens, a borough of New York City. We asked more about it and met Ed Platt from the American Institute of Anthropology. We asked him if we could go on the dig, and he said yes. He was very glad that he had people who could help.

My parents and I went there every weekend for about three months. It may not seem like there would be many artifacts in a borough of New York City, but surprisingly, there were things such as Palaeo-Indian hammerstones, Indian arrowheads, and prehistoric Lamoka points dating back to 2500 B.C. The oldest artifacts were spearheads from 3000 B.C.

Most of the artifacts came from the Victorian period, mostly pottery, occasional clay pipes and glass fragments. Once my father found a Victorian safety pin. Once we found a huge pot in pieces. My mother asked if she could put it together, and she took it home.

My advice to someone who is looking for something that seems like it is not available in their area is to search as much as you can. If you cannot find anything, you will eventually find something after you give up!

Arranging Things So Mom Could Work Outside the Home

From Sara Dilliplane of New Jersey:

In 1989 my sister and I had always gone to school. We went to a private school in Cambridge, Mass., and at the time I was 9 and my sister Susie was 7. I was not doing all that well, and we were both unhappy there. We talked about different possibilities - staying in school or changing schools - but finally decided to homeschool.

But there was a problem. My mother had a part-time job in a Boston public school as a literature specialist, and she had to be there some days a week. We really wanted to homeschool, though, and Mom hated to see us so miserable, so we got to work and figured out some solutions that would work for us.

The main thing Mom did was ask the school if she could do a

lot of her work at home. The school agreed, but said that she had to come in one day a week to help with things in the Literacy Center. They also said that if they needed her help on other days, she would have to come in.

So we could carry out our plan to homeschool, but Mom still had to figure out who would stay with us on that one day a week when she was at work. First she asked my dad to stay home, just for the morning (until 11:00 or so) on that day, and he could make up the work later in the week. Dad agreed to this.

Second, Mom hired a graduate student from a local university to come for the rest of the day. The graduate student, Diane (fake name), was at first really nice and easygoing with us. But she was a graduate student in education, and she always tried to make us learn things with her, her way, which was not the way we wanted, or Mom wanted us, to do things. We wanted to do the things that we had planned with Mom the night before. We had our work and Diane had hers; all we needed her for was to make lunch and answer the phone, and just to be there in case we needed something. But she kept interfering. One time Susie was doing some math and was having trouble with some really simple multiplication. Diane came over, took one look at her, and the next thing Susie knew, Diane was having her make flash cards and memorize the six-times table with them! At age 7! That's just what we both didn't like about school, sitting down and memorizing things with stuff like flash cards and workbooks.

My mother had a part-time job, and she had to be there some days a week. We really wanted to homeschool, though, so we figured out some solutions that would work for us.

Susie and I had to break Diane of her habit of having us do things her way, the way my old school teacher, who I'd hated, did things. So Mom, Susie, and I talked it over, and Mom told Diane, without hurting her feelings, that we didn't really need her to take over. But then it was up to me and Susie, every Thursday, to let her know that. We knew what we were doing and we didn't need her to interfere. I got mad at her sometimes and she never seemed to understand our homeschooling ways. Another exam-ple is one Thursday I started writing a story that my Mom and I had talked about the night before. It was short, based on memories of going on vacation years back. I had written it a little like this book I had read and loved, where the text was very simple. I was going to draw pictures for it.

After I had finished writing the first draft, I showed it to Diane, hoping she would be impressed and think I was a good writer. But she didn't like it. She made fun of it a little bit, teasing me about how my spelling and sentences were. She didn't get that it was supposed to be poem-like. At the end of my story, she said, "Well, that is interesting, Sara, but when are you going to write the ending?" I was embarrassed, hurt, and mad, all at the same time.

So Diane wasn't exactly the way we had thought she would be, and she wasn't really the kind of person we needed. But we tried not to let her opinions get in the way of what we were trying to do. For once a week, Diane was not all that bad, and I'm glad we had her for that year, because it let us homeschool the rest of the week. Towards the end we played games and had some fun.

Finally, the last thing Mom did so we could homeschool was that when the school told her that she had to come in extra days, we came with her! It wasn't very often, maybe one or two times a month. But on the days we came, we would pack up some homeschool work and lunch, and go. We would work in the library office while she worked just outside the door. It was actually kind of exciting and I liked the people who worked with Mom. All of the people Mom knew in the school stopped by and talked to us. They thought it was so neat that we were homeschooled and we could just take our work and do it there. After we had our lunch break (and had gotten our work done), we either played games or helped Mom. I liked to help. After we had come five or six times, we knew a lot about what kinds of things needed to be done and we helped Mom more and more. We learned so many things: how to repair old books, how to prepare new books for the shelves, stamping and taping books, getting books ready for a book sale. Once we even helped take inventory of the whole Literacy Center. Some of it was actually fun, and I liked the idea of helping Mom with her job and getting the work that needed to be done, done.

Now we don't live in Cambridge anymore because my dad got a new job in Princeton, NJ. Mom doesn't have that job, or any job, right now. We are still homeschooling, and it is much easier now that we don't have the problems that we used to. But some of the experiences from that year have carried over. When we go places, like to piano lessons and when we're in the car, we take work to do. And our experience proves that even in a typical traditional school, like that one my mom worked for, you can arrange unusual things like homeschooling your children and working for a job at the same time. And if you're homeschooling, you can work almost anywhere and any time. We were much more focused and concentrated then (and we are now) than we were in school. I'm glad that we don't have to face problems like that anymore, but it opened our minds to how what seems almost impossible can sometimes be solved.

Delivering Papers to Pay for Ballet Lessons

From Celeste Chan of Washington:

About a month ago I auditioned for Cornish College's prep dance program and was accepted. I was delighted until I found out that the lessons were very expensive. At first I thought my parents would be able to pay for them, but then I discovered that it wouldn't be easy for them to do that.

A friend of my mom's suggested that I deliver newspapers, since she used to help pay for her dance lessons that way. Mom's friend was very nice and very helpful.

Then my mom came across an ad for the *University Herald* newspaper, and she called and made an appointment with the

people there. My mom signed me up for two paper routes, because that way we can make enough money. Often my mom and my brother help me with the routes.

With the money from the paper routes I can pay for two dance classes. That is, after a whole five months of delivering papers I will be able to pay for two of the classes. I take a total of five, sometimes six, dance classes a week (there is a teen-adult ballet class, drop-in, that I sometimes take).

Delivering papers is a lot of fun because I can now afford to take all these classes and I can also be proud of the fact that I have earned some money.

Working With Horses in Exchange for Time to Ride

From Alex Huffman (CO):

I looked forward to getting a horse when we moved to Colorado, but we didn't have enough money to buy one after we bought our house. My mom and I talked about ways I could work with horses until we could afford our own. We tried to find friends who would let me ride their horses, but none of them would let me because they didn't trust me to know how to ride, even though I had had riding lessons in New Hampshire and can still ride quite well. So Mom said that we should wait a while and see what would turn up. I had to learn to be patient.

One day my mom met a woman who was in charge of a group called H-BAR-H, Horses for the Handicapped. She asked us if we wanted to do volunteer work for them, and we said yes. I got to get the horses from their corral, feed them their breakfast, groom them so they feel comfortable, saddle and bridle them, and lead them while handicapped riders are on them. I got to know the personalities of the different horses. After several classes I felt more confident in my ability to handle horses. I also felt less nervous about working with handicapped people. They are very friendly and cheerful.

The hard part of working for H-BAR-H is waiting to ride by myself. I had to accept that I couldn't ride the horses until after the classes were finished, and sometimes not even then. When I finally get to ride I feel rewarded for my work.

We are still saving money to build a barn and corral and to buy one or two horses, hopefully next summer. But I plan to go back to H-BAR-H because I enjoy it so much and learn from it too. It's been a very good solution for my problem.

Bartering, Giving Lessons

From Mika Perrine (WI):

Our family has come up with a number of creative solutions in dealing with the expense of teachers outside the home.

When I began learning algebra, my mom thought I needed someone more qualified than herself to teach me. Our neighbor and friend, John Thomason, used to teach high school math, so Mom asked him if he'd be willing to work with me. She proposed that in exchange for John tutoring me in math once a week, she would give his two homeschooled daughters art lessons. He accepted the offer, and we've been using that arrangement for over a year now.

My younger sister, Curi, is a horse fanatic. She doesn't have a horse of her own, but her bedroom walls are plastered with posters, and her dream is to someday own a horse ranch. Our neighbor, Felicia Parsons, has a farm with two horses. Earlier this year, after a visit with Felicia, Curi said she would love it if Felicia would give her riding lessons. Mom thought about it for a while and decided to offer Felicia some help with her farm in exchange for riding lessons for Curi. Felicia readily agreed.

So now we feed Felicia's many animals while she is gone on trips (no small task), and whenever Felicia has a chore that takes more than one person to do, my mom goes over and helps her. Mom has had to help load a cashmere billy goat into the back of a pickup and tattoo rabbits, among other tasks. In exchange for all this, Curi gets riding lessons once a week.

This year I started to learn Spanish, and I quickly discovered that it was very hard to learn if I didn't have someone to talk to in Spanish. Our good friend, Kathy Martin, has a sister living in Central America, and Kathy has lived in South America for several years. She speaks fluent Spanish, and my mom decided to ask her if she'd be willing to tutor me.

I have played violin for seven years, and Kathy had told us before that her 5-year-old son, Josh, was interested in learning to play the violin. So when my mom asked Kathy about tutoring me, Kathy suggested that, in exchange, I could work with Josh on the violin.

Once a week I spend twenty minutes with Josh, clapping rhythms and playing games to introduce him to Suzuki violin. At first, I thought it would be hard to teach someone so young, but it is turning out to be a lot of fun. After I work with Josh, Kathy spends an hour with me on Spanish, while Josh plays with my younger sisters.

My mom (the superwoman!) also works in exchange for my violin lessons. Our violin teacher's husband owns a local greenhouse, and my mom works there for several hours every week.

My mom looks at the many jobs she does as opportunities for her to learn. She knows a lot more about gardening after working at the greenhouse, and her knowledge of farming has grown since she has helped Felicia. The various jobs she has also give her time to get away from the house. She has made a lot of friends that she might not have met otherwise.

As you can see, not having a lot of money doesn't mean you have to miss out on education outside of the home. It just means you have to come up with some creative arrangements of your own. I'm glad my mom is willing to trade her time and work so that I can have more opportunities to learn.

Pen-Pals Are a Way to Meet Homeschoolers

From Sonnet Pierce (MO):

The main problem I have faced in my homeschooling is lack of other homeschoolers my age in my area. My family lives on eighty acres, and we are a half-hour's drive from a small town. There is a shortage of people my age, let alone people my age who homeschool.

Almost all the homeschoolers in my area have been younger than me. The few that have been teenagers have come from devoutly religious families, which is different from me.

So what I have ended up doing is getting homeschooling pen-pals. I put my name in the pen-pal section of GWS and other homeschooling magazines. I also wrote to people my age who were listed in the GWS Directory. I have even had the opportunity to meet one of my pen-pals and I have also talked to her on the phone. Talking to your pen-pals on the phone is a great way of getting to know them better. The only disadvantage is the long distance phone bill, so I wouldn't suggest doing it all the time.

My suggestion to anyone who doesn't have any like-minded homeschoolers their age who live nearby is to write, write, write. The GWS Directory is a good place to start. Just look up people your age and drop them a line. After all, a stamp only costs 29¢, so what do you have to lose?

Earning Money Through Gardening

From Jen Ryan (MN):

We had a problem in our family. The children needed a way to earn money. Originally, we received allowances like people on welfare. But then Mom and Dad thought allowances kept us from learning that work equals pay. Now, other ways of earning money had to be found. Mom and Dad had already thought of that!

A yard full of dandelions provided two things. While conquering the nasty weed, we could also make money. Our parents offered us one penny, then two pennies, for every decent-sized dandelion root that we dug in the yard. Most of us have made at least a little money from this system. But perhaps because the effort was too much for the reward, or because another opportunity arose, no one does this regularly. The dandelions still poke their heads above the grass in early summer, and their seeds assure us that we can make quick money for years to come!

As I said, another money-making opportunity appeared that seemed more promising. The Ryan family started Big Barn Farm vegetable business, producing fresh, chemical-free produce grown right on our own property.

We thought we had an ideal set-up for this type of business. We live on a fairly busy street, and we thought we would sell our vegetables from a stand in our yard. We had kept a family garden, but it wasn't big enough to grow all the vegetables that we wanted now. We have 38 acres of land, so we put an electric fence around an acre of it and mostly grew our vegetables there.

We had an auction to determine who would grow which crops. The highest bidder on each crop earned the right to grow and sell that plant, provided they paid the price at the end of the year. This money would cover electric fencing costs and water and land use. Mom and Dad decided that each of us would give one quarter of what we grew to the family for our use. We had to pay for our own seeds and anything else we would need, such as tomato stakes. I bought tomatoes for $33 and potatoes for $23.

For $10, my brother Ed won the right to grow beets. He simply scattered hundreds of seeds in a corner of the little garden, mulched them, and waited for them to grow. They grew so beautifully that when Ed had an order for beets he could easily fill it. That patch became a gold mine, and partly because of our cool summer, it produced almost $200! And who would expect beets to produce that?

While the unexpected crops blossomed, the expected did not. I planted the potatoes, which was harder than it had sounded when I called an experienced potato-grower in Wisconsin. I also planted the tomatoes. But I didn't keep them weeded and pest-free. I earned very minimal amounts on them, and I spent plenty of money on seeds and things. My debt will have to be paid from my savings account. I hope I will learn a lesson for next year!

But some of us did profit from what we grew, and besides that benefit, we profited in other ways. Experience with a business, such as pricing, marketing, and relating to buyers, were some of the things we learned. We learned about the life cycle of insects and plants, too. We didn't meet the goal of each of us earning money, but all the growers have a better idea of what it takes to earn money by growing vegetables. Part of it depends on the weather and most of the rest is hard work.

I quickly discovered that Spanish was very hard to learn if I didn't have someone to talk to. When my mom asked our friend Kathy about tutoring me in Spanish, Kathy suggested that, in exchange, I could work with her 5-year-old son Josh on the violin.

Newsletter Helps Writing Block

Mary Bercier of Louisiana writes:

It seems to me that I have always wanted to be a writer. But it was not only for publication that I desired to write. I had the romantic notion that writing itself was all fun and that somehow forming sentences into paragraphs, and paragraphs into stories, was just a wonderfully easy process. I can remember when my family went through a big remodeling project on our house, and my dad would tease me by saying, "Mary, when your room is finished, you can sit and gaze out of your dormer at the moonlit horizon and let it inspire you to write to your heart's content," and I truly believed him.

Having this romantic understanding of writing inspired me to think that I could even write my own book. But every time I wrote a sentence, I ended up having to rewrite it a thousand times because I didn't like it or it didn't sound right. The rewriting was so frustrating that I knew I would never have the stamina to complete a book at this rate.

I convinced myself that writing a book could be my long-range goal, but I still felt eager for people to see my writing now. How could I fulfill even that short-range need, though, when even here I felt unqualified? What had happened, I asked myself, to the poetic young Mary who had flipped out poems and stories with ease and had even been published at the age of 9?

I prayed, "How do I overcome this paralyzing feeling of inadequacy?" I cried. I talked with friends and family. Then finally, after refusing to give up my dream, I slowly began to work at overcoming the obstacles that I perceived.

I began to study Latin, which helped me to improve my grammar as well as my vocabulary. I also learned how to use a computer. By reading several manuals and spending hours just exploring the computer, I soon became so familiar with it that I have even taught my dad a few tricks. Learning this not only surprised me but also encouraged me greatly. Soon I found I could rework my sentences neatly towards perfection without much stress.

Another obstacle (which concerned my mom more than it did me) was spelling. I was, and still am, the worst of spellers, but a remedy that seems to be working for me was recommended by John Holt. His recommendation was to type. I decided to give it a shot by teaching myself to type through the use of an old textbook. My spelling has improved, just as he said it would, because I now have to take time to slowly sound out each word as I type it, and see the result as I read it.

Some credit, however, has to also go to homeschooling which provided the flexibility and time I needed to focus on my writing skills with a renewed zeal, and the freedom from "grade-stress" to do a creative job. This creative energy led me to think, why not edit my own newsletter? Then other struggling young writers would also have a place for their work *now*. It was hard to get going, but I had gained so much stamina from all the hard work at improving my writing skills that I wasn't going to give up without a real effort. In July I published the first issue of *Quaere Verum*. Much to my delight, it seems to be a great success. I'm thrilled.

But the greatest miracle is not the success of *Quaere Verum* but the fun I had killing myself reworking sentences all day and night. Learning has truly become a labor of love.

JOHN HOLT'S BOOK AND MUSIC STORE

Explorabook

by John Cassidy and The Exploratorium. #1674 $17.95

Like John Cassidy's other Klutz Press books, this witty book is a lot of different kinds of fun in one great package. I thought it would be fun to review this book because it is based on the science activities at the Exploratorium in my native San Francisco. I had even more fun than I had anticipated. My playgroup of 5 year olds and I spent one afternoon using this tool to learn about all sorts of science facts in a hands-on way that leaves the average science textbook on the shelf.

The book is divided into seven sections, each containing its own special tools. For example, the magnet, used in the section on magnetism, is securely attached to the book's looseleaf binding; the section on bending light waves comes with its own flat prism; "Bacterial Stories" come with packets of agar, a bacterial and fungal food derived from seaweed. Each section contains easy-to-understand directions for very interesting and unusual experiments.

"Bacterial Stories" took us on a week-long safari. We prepared agar gel according to the directions (1/2 cup is a banquet in germs' terms), then collected bacteria from several locations in the house using transparent tape. After depositing the bacteria into the feast of agar and putting the dish in a cool dark place for one week, the results were - well, you'll just have to see for yourself. The children loved it. (Personally, I'm not fond of anything I have to shave to identify!)

Along with the experiments are many fun facts that together form an interesting, simplified look at the subject at hand. "Bacterial Heroes," part of the "Bacterial Stories" chapter, starts out by saying:

> For a beginning bacteriologist like yourself, probably the most surprising discovery you'll make is how unfairly bacteria have been treated over the years. Most people don't think about bacteria much, but when they do, their thoughts are generally about things like infections, spoiled fruit, smelly socks, etc. As a result, most people don't have very positive feelings about bacteria or fungi.

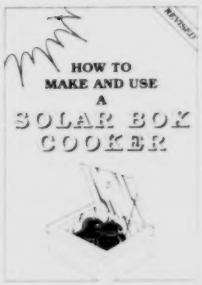
The book goes on to say that two million years ago, bacteria were the only forms of life on our planet. Earth wasn't able to support complex forms of life because the air and soil weren't just right. However, thanks to the hard work of the lowly bacteria, the soil and air improved enough to support more complex life forms (like us!). The book also tells us that millions of individual bacteria call our bodies home, and that most of them are harmless unless they get into the wrong place at the wrong time. If it weren't for bacteria helping us break down the food we eat, we'd starve to death.

This is just one small example of the information that's packed into this very colorful, sturdy book. Other subjects include Optical Illusions (Moire spinner included), Homemade Science (with a nice chapter on hair dryer safety), Gravity Races, Light Wave Craziness (one page of this chapter is a flat piece of etched flexible plastic which mimics diffraction gratings - the same type of device photographers use to exaggerate the twinkling of stars in nighttime photography), and Bouncing Light Rays (with its own Mylar mirror).

There are more than fifty activities in this book along with the tools to do almost all of them. There is something here for everyone, and enough material to interest learners at all levels. All you need is time and curiosity. — Ann Barr

How to Make and Use a Solar Box Cooker

by Solar Box Cookers International #1684 $5



I have wanted to be able to cook with solar energy for quite a while, but I never had any really good, simple directions for how to go about this. Then, one day, this book came into our office for review. "Neat!" I said. "Let's see if this is what I've been looking for."

The principle seems pretty straightforward: dark, covered pots and a dark tray turn sunlight into heat, a reflector catches extra sunlight and reflects it onto the cooking pots, a clear window lets in sunlight and holds in heat, and an insulated box holds in the heat to cook the food. Simple. But is it hard to build?

Not really. There are instructions for each step, from gathering materials to cutting, gluing, assembling, and using. Some of the options in Step 2, Cut Cardboard for Boxes, seemed a little confusing at first glance, but they were really straightforward when I actually got to the point of construction. My 11-year-old son and I built our cooker in less than a week of on-again, off-again work.

Well, is this expensive? Will I have to buy a lot of stuff? No! The oven is built from cardboard, foil, glue, one piece of glass, a stick, and a black metal or aluminum foil tray. I scrounged the cardboard from used boxes at home and at the office, and most of the rest was lying around my house somewhere. The book lists alternative materials for almost everything.

Does it work? In my experience, yes, but you have to be a little bit patient. Smaller pieces cook faster than larger pieces. I built a one-quarter size model which I have used on more than one occasion as a hot dog cooker. It can heat hot dogs to a good

serving temperature in ten to fifteen minutes. The book says rice takes about an hour, bread takes about three hours, and stew can take five hours or more to cook completely in a full-size cooker.

Drawbacks: you do have to have sun. This oven does not work well on cloudy days. Mine does not work well on a sunny day on a screened porch; apparently, the screen cuts the sun's intensity too much (something I never realized before.) Also, in my neighborhood, I'm not comfortable leaving the cooker unattended for any length of time because we have cats, squirrels, and other critters running through, and I'd rather not be feeding them my food.

On the whole, I like this book. It makes a neat project, lets us "do science" that we can eventually eat (my favorite kind!), and helps us make a positive change in our environment, at least occasionally. And at this price, it's hard to go wrong!

— Ginger Fitzsimmons

A Walk in the Rainforest

by Kristin Joy Pratt #1716 $6.95

A few months ago the folks at Holt Associates sent me a stack of science-oriented books to peruse. One book stood out because of the brilliance of its cover's color. The magazine-sized book, *A Walk in the Rainforest*, written and illustrated by Kristin Joy Pratt at the age of 15, is as brilliant inside as it is out.

This is the story of XYZ, the ant, and the plants and animals he sees - in alphabetical order - as he wanders through the rainforest. As I was noticing how cleverly Pratt guides XYZ and the reader along the journey using richly colored illustrations, it dawned on me that this is not just a picture book for young children. Actually, it is an excellent picture book; it's also a marvelous primer for new readers because the printing under each illustration is very large and at an easy-to-read level. So we have the glorious illustrations (one animal or plant for each letter of the alphabet), nice large captions under each picture, and below that, in normal-sized print, is an entertaining paragraph that goes into greater depth. Pratt takes every opportunity to go into detail about the illustrated subjects and why they're important to the ecocystems of the rainforests. My favorite was "a hurried hummingbird sipping nectar from a passion flower":

> Over three hundred species of hummingbirds make their home in the Americas. However, they are most common in the rainforests of South America. They range from 2 inches to 8 1/2 inches long and come in a variety of brilliant colors. That is why many of them are named after jewels like rubies, sapphires, and emeralds. These tiny jewels fly amazingly fast - up to seventy-one miles per hour. Hummingbirds use their long beaks and tongues to sip nectar from flowers. The flowers of the rainforests need these speedy nectar sippers to pollinate them.

I brought this treasure to one of my monthly daycare-provider support group meetings. About ten of us sat down on our hostess's playroom floor and began leafing through the pages. I can't even count all the oohs and aahs there were. All of us agreed: we want this book as part of our regular daycare materials. The most common comment from the group was that there was something in this book for everyone - pictures for the babies, large-print words for the young readers to sound out, and information for older readers. People said they could picture whole families sitting together to enjoy this treasure.

This book makes evident the possible (or probable) demise of the rainforests if we don't intervene to reverse what's happening. It cleverly tells the tale in a way that helps the reader become aware and genuinely concerned. I feel that we all need to become aware of what is happening to our home, and that every family should have the information they need to make decisions about what they can do to help. This book is a delightful way to do just that. — Ann Barr

The Flying Circus of Physics with Answers

by Jearl Walker #1678 $17.95

The Flying Circus of Physics is an unusual book, designed to provoke curiosity, experimentation, and research. It deals with over six hundred topics based on fun questions about everyday happenings. It is a very enjoyable and accessible way to learn a great deal about physics.

The book is divided into three sections. The first part describes scientific phenomena (sometimes with accompanying diagrams or pictures) and then poses one or more questions about each phenomenon. Some thought-provoking examples: (1)Why are most clouds white? Why aren't they blue like the sky? And why are other clouds dark? (2) How does a string telephone work? How does the pitch heard in the receiving can depend on the tightness and density of the string and the size of the can? (3) Why is it so quiet after a snowstorm? (4) Why does your singing sound so much richer and fuller in the shower? (5) Why does a spinning top stand up? (6) What pushes you to shore when you're surfing? Are you pushed by the wave or are you continuously falling downhill?

The second section is a bibliography with more than 1600 references to books and magazines, making it easy to begin to research books in the library. Numbers next to each phenomenon discussed in the first section refer you to appropriate references in the second section. At the end of this section there is an index, so topics of particular interest can be easily selected.

The final section contains the author's short answers to the questions raised in the first section. The author has some reluctance about including this information because, as he says, "You may flip to the answer section of this book so quickly that you miss the excitement of the questions. Unless you savor the question you will miss the point of the book."

Any of the topics presented could occupy a reader for quite some time, so this book is a rich resource, appropriate for adults as well as younger learners. It's a mine of enjoyable information, set out in a very easy-to-access format.

The answer section uses physics terminology and concepts which some might find too technical, but in general the book is quite readable and interesting. The research that it encourages you to do is not abstract or theoretical, but quite concrete. The excitement of the book comes mainly from the everyday, down-to-earth nature of the problems posed. As the author says in the

preface, "I hope that this book will capture you enough that you begin to find your own flying circus of physics in your own world." — Michael and Maureen Carey

Tom Brown's Field Guide to Nature Observation and Tracking

by Tom Brown Jr. #1712 $8.95

A track wanders off through the snow-covered field. You crouch down to examine it more closely and wonder what has passed here, where it was going, and what it was doing. *Tom Brown's Field Guide to Nature Observation and Tracking* will not only help you to answer these questions, it will give you a deeper understanding of nature and life.

This book is not your usual field guide. It doesn't just give you a few pictures of tracks and an explanation of the animal that matches up with that track. Although it does this, it also goes much further. You're told how to find tracks on hard ground on which you would think nothing could be recorded. From the depth of the depression, which way the dirt was pushed, and other signs, you will learn, with practice, how to figure out the mindset of an animal and what it was doing. Tom Brown not only tells you about the observation of tracks; he also enlightens you on how to observe the actual track-makers, the animals.

Before I read this book, I would often hear stories about Native Americans walking silently through the woods, and I always wondered how they were able to accomplish this. Tom Brown explains about the fox walk and the weasel walk for walking through the woods quietly, but he starts you out with the coyote walk. This involves w lking around in a "natural area" as you usually would, for a t two minutes, and then walking the same path at about t tenth the pace. At that rate you notice more, and more things *don't* notice you. One time I tried to find the nests of some red-winged blackbirds by creeping up on the area where I thought they were. Though I was unsuccessful in actually locating a nest, I watched the behavior of red-winged blackbirds and learned about how they protected their home. I wouldn't have noticed as much as I did if I had been just crashing through the field. As Tom Brown says, "With nature observation, the fastest way to get there is to slow down!"

I find that the structure of this book is a good format for learning. You are given an explanation, and an exercise usually follows to help you learn what was explained. This way you know what is a good way to practice, instead of having to make up your own exercise that might not stress the right thing. You may notice that I mention the word "practice" a lot. Like most things, to be able to observe and track well you will, of course, need to work at it. As I said before, this is not an identification manual, but a book to help you learn a skill.

Tom Brown has been in close contact with the natural world for much of his life. His teacher for nature observation was Stalking Wolf, an Apache Indian, whose grandson was a friend of Tom Brown. Tom Brown is not an armchair observer; he has made observing and tracking his way of life. And he believes so strongly in this that he is passing on his knowledge not only through his books but also through workshops that he runs throughout the summer.

In a world where environmental awareness is growing all the time, this book gives you a way to open the door to a whole new world of worlds. Things you never knew existed will appear everywhere you look. This book will change not only your perspective of the world; it will change you. — Christian Murphy

GWS Back Issues and Index

Back Issues: We strongly urge you to get the back issues of GWS, especially if you plan to begin homeschooling. Rates: $135 for a complete set. For any other combination of back issues, mailed at one time to one address, the cost is $2 each plus $2 per order.

Index to GWS #1-85: #1652, $5.95. Now in one volume!

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1993 Directory of Families

Here is our complete 1993 Directory. If your entry arrived after our cut-off date (October 15), it will appear in GWS #91. The Directory of Families doesn't list organizations and support groups unless they are part of a family's listing. To find groups in your state, see the Homeschooling Organizations list that begins on page 35.

Our Directory is *not* a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses, that person is in the Directory. We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are not in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out.

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Germany — Valerie & Richard MOON (Brian/70, Andy & Cindy/80, Rosie/82) HQs USAREUR & 7th Army, CMR 420, Box 1908, APO AE 09063 **(H)** ••• TSgt & Mrs. Jack SARTORIS, PSC Box 2928, APO AE 09009 ••• Zack & Holly SHALTZ (Christopher/79, Jonathan/81, Bethany/91) JICEUR, Unit 30400 Box 613, APO AE 09128 ••• Margy & Dietmar WALTER (Carrie/81, Ingo/84, Steven/86) Finkenweg 14, 7311 Hochdorf

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Ireland — Jane & Frank DONEGAN (Sean/80, Brendan/83, Conor/84, Aidan/89) Drumbuoy, Newtowncunningham, Co. Donegal **(H)** ••• John & Cindy DRING (Megan/76, Simon/79, Ethan/83, Gwen/85) The Farm, Moycullen, Co. Galway **(H)** ••• Roger & Marie MANKTELOW (Matthew/80, Ruari/83, Niall/87) 29 Moneywick Rd, Randalstown, Co. Antrim, BT41 3HW (H) ••• Mary & John SHEEHAN (Patrick/89) 14 Glenard, Mona Valley, Tralee, Co. Kerry **(H)**

Japan — David & Keiko CARLSON (Emily/89) 1780 Hirooka, Gobara, Shiojiri, Nagano-ken 399-07 **(H)** ••• Todd EGGER & Debbie TREIJS (Keir/88, Teryn/90) 624 Nakada, Toyoda-cho, Iwata-gun, Shizuoka-ken 7438 ••• Heather & James HACKETT (Mani/84, Noa/91) Nakayagiri 308-1, Matsudo, Chiba 271 ••• Takeshi & Barbara HANAOKA (Kitty/86) T665 Takarazuka-shi, Nakayama Soen 2 ban 16 go ••• Candis LITSEY & Edward YOUNG (Evan/82, Sarah/85) 2-24-14 Kakinokizaka, Meguro-ku Tokyo 152 **(H)** ••• Judith & Ashley LYE (Kirstin/83, Matthew/85) 8-4-9 Fukasawa, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 158 ••• Sandy MATTHEWS & Chris GILMAN (Caitlin/82, Corinne/83) 7-1-49 Midorimachi #201, Kita ku, Kobe 651-12 ••• Noriko & Randy NIELSEN (Sasha/89) 2-22-8 Hanegi Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 156 **(H)**

The Netherlands — Sabina & Eduard deSTURBER (Aaron/80) Hujo Verriesthof 21 II 1064 HW, Amsterdam ••• Liz & Pieter GROENVELD (Lizzy/87) Raadhuislaan 31, 2131 BG Hoofddorp **(H)** ••• Christopher MAHONEY & Carolyn COHEN (Bran/85, Tara(Penny)/87) USDA-APHIS-IS, American Embassy-Hague, PSC 71 Box 1000, APO AE 09715 ••• Donna RICHOUX & Frank ROSS (Norna/87) Boukelstrat 14, 2131 WT Hoofddorp

New Zealand — Kelvin & Noeline BARKLA (Elizabeth/80, Jane/83, Thomas/87) 17 Meremere Rd, RD 12, Hawera ••• Channa & Barry VALLEN (Shmuel/87, Emy-Briah/89) 12 Scott St, New Plymouth **(H)** ••• Jill & Peter WHITMORE (Tom/75, Ben/77, Anna/88) 3 Thompson Rd, Panmure, Auckland 6 **(H)**

Elsewhere:
Candace & Charles COE (Christopher/84, Amber/86) PO Box 789, Manila **Philippines** 1099 ••• Elese COIT & Gary SCHULLER (Magali/88) 30 Rue des Mimosas, 1030 Brussels, **Belgium (H)** ••• Patrick & Johanna CURRAN (Emmett/78, Malachy/79, Mikey/83) PB A67, Maseru 100, Lesotho, **Southern Africa** ••• John & Beverly GOLDEN (Judith/81, Gabriel/83, Zachary/86, Rachael/89) PSC Box 868, APO New York 09291 (**Crete**) ••• Dave & Leora GROVES (Timon/75, Austin/80) PO Box 2632, APO New York 09224 (**Turkey**) ••• Elsa HAAS, Aprender Sin Escuela, Apartado 28198, Madrid 28080, **Spain** ••• David & Fiona HANCOCK (Laura/83, Graham/86) 08 Calle Gardenia, San Francisco, Rio Piedras, **Puerto Rico** 00927 ••• Dan & Gloria HARRISON (Elizabeth/74, Antonia/78, Anna & Sophia/84) American Embassy, PSC 83, Box R, APO AE 09726 (**Portugal**) **(H)** ••• Mark & Kerry KANTOR (Grace/85, Maxwell/90) 1344 Paradise Dr, APO San Francisco CA 96334-5000 ••• Mary Pat & Charnchai KENGMANA (Lucas/85, Nicholas/87, Duncan/89) 2nd floor, 11A Stanley Beach Rd, **Hong Kong** ••• Carrie & Brandon KNOX (Corey/82, Samatha/89) Whispering Pines Ranch, Red Rock TX 78662 (**Costa Rica**) ••• Hope & Einar KNUTSSON (Tryggvi/74, Katla/77) Aessufell 4, apt 2F, 111 Rekjavik, **Iceland** ••• Bob & Marie McFETRIDGE (Elizka/87, Kiva/91) 802 E Washington, Brownsville TX 78520 (**Mexico**) ••• Joaquim & Flory MONTEIRO (Myola/76, Myron/85) PO Box 7682, Dubai **United Arab Emirates (H)** ••• Lynda & Nigel NORTON (Isaiah/85, Ru'ya/88) PO Box 607, Colonia, Yap, Western Caroline Isl (**Micronesia**) ••• James PETRAIT, St. Joseph High School, Plc 3, Rt 2, Frederiksted, St. Croix, **Virgin Islands** 00840 ••• Khalid & Terrie RASHEED (Abdullah/83) PO Box 25239, Riyadh, 11466 (**Saudi Arabia**) **(H)** ••• Jennifer & Loren SCHMIDT (Jonathan/85, Alexander/88) 42 Dasco Ct, Yigo, **Guam** 96929 ••• William & Marie STIGLIANI (Marisa/82, Claire/83, Emilie/85, Caterina/87, Anthony/90) Ottensteinstrasse 123, Sudstadt A2344, **Austria (H)** ••• Bippan & Peter SZIL-NORBERG (Lomi/81,Tolmi/86) Apdo 51, E-03530 La Nucia (Alicante) **Spain (H)** ••• Law & Peggy WATKINS (Nathaniel/74, Sophia/79) Nangaretu, Malakara via Edayaranmula, 689532 Kerala, **India** ••• Miranda Mady WELTER & Maurice TRAPP (Nikolas/83, Selina/87, Markandeya/91) House 5, L-8541, Kapweiler, **Luxembourg (H)** ••• Anne & Ed WHEELER (Jessica/79, Rachel/84, Nicholas/89) USAID/Dhaka/6120, Washington, DC 20521-6120 (**Bangladesh**) ••• David & Adrienne WHITEHEAD (Kristal/79, Patrick/81, Daniel/86) PSC 478-G, FPO AP 96313-1800 (**Kamisaya**)

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Organization (only if address is same as family):

Children (names/birthyears):

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Directory of Organizations

The following lists are updated periodically throughout the year and sold separately as our Homeschooling Resource List, available for $2.50.

Correspondence Schools or Curriculum Suppliers

Alpha Omega Publications, PO Box 3153, Tempe AZ 85281; 602-438-2717
Alta Vista College Press Home School Curric, PO Box 222, Medina WA 98039; 206-453-7848
American Home Academy Materials, 2770 S 1000 W, Perry UT 84302
American School, 850 E 58th, Chicago IL 60637 (high school)
Associated Christian Schools, PO Box 27115, Indianapolis IN 46227; 317-881-7132
Brigham Young U-Dept of Independent Study, 206 Harman Continuing Ed Bldg, Provo UT 84602
Calvert School, 105 Tuscany Rd, Baltimore MD 21210
Christian Liberty Academy, 502 W Euclid Ave, Arlington Hts IL 60004
Christian Light Publications, PO Box 1126, Harrisonburg VA 22801-1126; 703-434-0768
Classic Curriculum, Dept G, PO Box 656, Milford MI 48042; 313-481-7008 or 1-800-348-6688
Educators Publishing Service, 75 Moulton St, Cambridge MA 02238
Glenn Distributors, 7251 Bass Hwy, St Cloud MN 32769
Hewitt Research Foundation, PO Box 9, Washougal WA 98671; 206-835-8708
Home Study Alternative School, PO Box 10356, Newport Beach CA 92658
Home Study Directory: Nat'l Home Study Council, 1601 18th St NW, Wash DC 20009.
Home Study Institute, 6940 Carroll Ave, Takoma Park MD 20912; 202-723-0800
International Institute, PO Box 99, Park Ridge IL 60068
Kolbe Academy, 1600 F St, Napa CA 94559
Laurel Spring School, PO Box 1440, Ojai 93024
Living Heritage Academy, PO Box 1438, Lewisville TX 75067
McGuffey Academy, 2213 Spur Trail, Grapevine TX 76051; 817-481-7008
The Moore Foundation, Box 1, Camas WA 98607
National Book Co, 333 SW Park Ave, Portland OR 97205-3784; 503-228-6345
Oak Meadow School, PO Box 712, Blacksburg VA 24063; 703-552-3263
Our Lady of Victory School, PO Box 5181, Mission Hills CA 91345
Pensacola Christian Correspondence School, Box 18000, Pensacola FL 32523
Phoenix Special Programs, 3132 W Clarendon, Phoenix AZ 85017 (high school)
Rod & Staff Publishers, Crockett KY 41413; 606-522-4348
Seton School Home Study, One Kidd Ln, Front Royal VA 22630-3332; 703-636-9990
SMM Educational Services, Box 1079, Sunland CA 91040 818-352-2310
Textbooks for Parents, Box 209, Kendrick ID 83537; 208-276-4721
U of Nebraska Independent Study High School, Continuing Ed Ctr Rm 269, Lincoln NE 68583
Weaver Curriculum, 2752 Scarborough, Riverside CA 92503 (Pre K-6th, 7-12th supplements)
For high school, college and grad courses, see PETERSON'S INDEPENDENT STUDY CATALOG, available from Holt Associates, 2269 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge MA 02140 for $11.95 + $3 postage.

Helpful Private Schools

Private schools enrolling or helping homeschoolers in various ways (curricula, legal help, support). Send SASE.
Abbott Loop Christian Ctr, 2626 Abbott Rd, Anchorage AK 99507
Abington Academy, 176 Main St, Yarmouthport MA 02675 (Cape Cod only)
Alpha Christian School, Rt 1, Perry KS 66073; 913-597-5822
American Heritage Christian Academy, 9027 Calvine Rd, Sacramento CA 95829; 916-682-2382
Arivaca Community School, PO Box 24, Arivaca AZ 85601
Baldwin Park Christian School, 13940 E Merced, Baldwin Park CA 91706; 916-337-8828
Bay Shore School, PO Box 13038, Long Beach CA 90803; 310-434-3940
Cair Paravel Satellite Schools, 913-232-9721 (KS)
Calumet School, RD 1 Box 95, Smyrna NY 13464
Cascade Canyon School, 459-3464 (San Anselmo, CA)
Christian Chapel Schools, 1920 S Brea Cyn Cut-off Rd, Walnut CA 91789; 714-598-9733
Christian Family Educational Services, PO Box 47159, Phoenix AZ 85068
Clonlara Home Based Education Program, 1289 Jewett St, Ann Arbor MI 48104; 313-769-4515
Dayspring Christian Academy, PO Box 60956, Palo Alto CA 94306
Discovery Christian School, 5547 Alabama Dr, Concord CA 94521; 415-672-5670
G.A.T.E. School, 1725 N Date #43, Mesa AZ 85201; 969-4821
Grassroots Free School, 2458 Grassroots Way, Tallahassee FL 32301; 904-656-3629
High Meadow, 60 Gatehouse RD, New Paltz NY 12561; 914-255-8842
Home-Centered Learning, PO Box 92, Escondido CA 92025; 619-749-1522
Independence Private School, c/o Principal: M. Black, 45 Albert St North, Orilla, ONT L3V 5K3, Canada
The Learning Community, 9085 Flamepool Way, Columbia MD 21045; 301-730-0073
Little Piney School, Rt 1 Box 20, Newburg MO 65550
Little Red Home School, 9669 E 123rd, Hastings MN 55033; 437-3049
Magic Meadow School, PO Box 29, N San Juan CA 95960
Meter Schools, PO Box 427, Rosharon TX 77583
Morning Glory Private School, PO Box 20, Ft White FL 32028
Mount Vernon Academy, 184 Vine St, Murray UT 84107
Mt Carmel Academy, RD 1 Box 1737, Waterville VT 05492
Muncie Christian School, 230 S 65th, Kansas City MO 66111; 913-788-3018
North Long Beach Calvary Chapel, 132 E Artesia Blvd, Long Beach CA 90805; 213-428-5166
Pilgrim Christian School, 3759 E 57th St, Maywood CA 90270; 213-585-3167
Pilgrim School, 531 N Balna, Porterville CA 93257; 209-782-0402
Pinewood School, 112 Road D, Pine CO 80470; 303-838-4418
Pittsburgh Urban Christian Coal. School, 412-322-8324 (PA)
Rocky Mountain High Academy, PO Box 418, Flora Vista NM 87415
Saddleback Valley Ctr, Box 912, El Toro CA 92630; 714-855-8003
Santa Fe Community School, PO Box 2241, Santa Fe NM 87501; 505-471-6928
Seedling, c/o Joy Reiter, 69 Sanderson Crescent, Richmond Hill Ontario L4C 5L5, Canada
Sidney Ledson School, 33 Overland Dr, Don Mills, Ont, Canada M3C 2C3; 416-447-5355
Snohomish County Christian School, 1215 Olympic Ave, Edmonds WA 98020; 206-771-1793
Stonemoor Hills School, 3 Stonemoor Dr, Pueblo CO 81005; 303-561-3510
Summit Christian Academy, 13789 Noel Rd, Suite 100, Dallas TX 75240
Sycamore Tree, 2179 Meyer Pl, Costa Mesa CA 92627; 714-650-4466
TEACH, 4350 Lakeland Ave, N Robbinsdale MN 55422

Homeschooling Organizations

If you write to these groups, please send a SASE. Use International Postal Coupons outside of U.S. These groups will usually be able to refer you to smaller, more localized support groups.

State or Local Groups: (alphabetically by state)

STATES A-C

AL: Alabama Home Educators, PO Box 16091, Mobile 36116
Alabama Home Educators - Tuscaloosa Area, Rt 3 Box 633, Cottondale 35453
Homeschool Advocates, 5962 Chalet Dr North, Mobile 36608; 205-344-3239
AK: Alaska Homeschool Assoc, PO Box 874075, Wasilla 99687; 907-373-7404
AZ: Arizona Families for Home Education, 639 E Kino Dr, Mesa 85203; 964-7435
Bethany Home Educators, 2720 S Flint Cir, Mesa 85202
Home School Supplies, 1125 E Quick Draw Pl, Tucson 85749
Parents Assoc of Christian Home Schools, 6166 W Highland, Phoenix 85033
Phoenix Learning Alternatives Network, 8835 N 47th Pl, Phoenix 85028; 602-483-3381
SPICE, 10414 W Mulberry Dr, Phoenix 85039
AR: Arkansas Christian Home Education Assoc, PO Box 501, Little Rock 72203; 501-753-9164
CA: Bakersfield Open Support Grp, 805-836-3454
California Coalition - PALS, PO Box 92, Escondido 92025; 619-749-1522
Center for Educational Guidance, PO Box 445, N San Juan 95960; 916-292-3623
Children and Community Network, c/o Lynne Knowles, 14556 Little Greenhorn Rd, Grass Valley 95945
Christian Family Schools, PO Box 23068, San Jose 95153-3068
Christian Home Educators of CA, PO Box 28644, Santa Ana 92799-8644; 714-537-5121
Community Education Gazette, PO Box 445, N San Juan 95960

Esparto Homeschoolers, PO Box 305, Esparto 95627; 916-787-3613
North Santa Clara Valley Homeschoolers, 795 Sheraton Dr, Sunnyvale 94087
Northern California Homeschoolers Assoc, PO Box 431, Petaluma 94953-0431; 707-765-5375
Peninsula Homeschoolers, 4795 Lage Dr, San Jose 95130; 408-379-6835
San Diego Homeschoolers, 3521 Mt Aclare Ave, San Diego 92111
Sonoma County Homeschoolers, 8600 Templeman Rd, Forestville 95436
South St Centre, Box 261, Boulder Creek 95006 (resource ctr for families)
South Valley Homeschoolers Assn, Box 961, San Martin 95046
SPICE, c/o PO Box 282, Wilton 95693
Wildflower Homeschoolers, 4572 El Dorado Ct, Pleasanton 94566; 415-462-9516
Yosemite Area Homeschoolers, PO Box 74, Midpines 95345

CO: Colorado Home Educators' Assoc, 303-650-8833
Colorado Home Schooling Network, 7490 W Apache, Sedalia 80135; 303-688-4136
Colorado Springs Homeschoolers, 2906 Marilyn Rd, Colorado Springs 80909; 719-598-8444
Home Educators for Excellence of Durango, c/o Haratyc, 11 Animas Pl, Durango 81301; 303-247-2675
Northern Colorado Home School Assoc, 4633 Skyline Dr, Ft Collins 80526
Unschoolers Family Support Grp, 5315 Landgan St, Colorado Spgs 80919

CT: Connecticut Home Educators Assoc, 63 Spindrift Ln, Guilford CT 06437; 203-457-1642

STATES D-K

DE: Tri State Homeschoolers Assoc, PO Box 7193, Newark 19714-7193

FL: ABC Homeschool Cooperative, c/o Joyce Bussell, 1140 NE Town Terr, Jensen Beach 34957; 407-334-2083
Family Learning Exchange, 2020 Turpentine Rd, Mims 32754
Florida Assoc for Schools at Home, 1000 Devil's Dip, Tallahassee 32308; 878-2793
Florida Parent-Educators Assoc, 20051 Quesada Ave, Port Charlotte 33952
Parkland Home Educators, 2111 Oakhurst Av, Winter Park 32792; 407-679-6890; 657-7560

GA: Atlanta Alternative Education Network, c/o Paymer, 1158 McConnell Dr, Decatur 30033
Cobb County Homeschoolers, 813 Wyntuck Dr, Kennesaw 30144
Free to Learn at Home, 4439 Lake Forest Dr, Oakwood 30566; 404-536-8077
Georgians for Freedom in Education, 209 Cobb St, Palmetto 30268; 404-463-3719
North Side Atlanta Homeschoolers, c/o Jane Kelly, 4141 Wieuca, Atlanta 30342
REACH, c/o Vicki Scott, 617 Colony Ct, Woodstock 30188

HI: Christian Homeschoolers of Hawaii, 910824 Oama St, Ewa Beach 96706; 689-6398.
Friends Learning at Home, PO Box 3476, Mililani 96789
Hawaii Island Home Educators, 968-8076 or 965-9002
Hawaii Homeschool Assn, 66960 Kuewa Dr, Waialua 96791
Maui Home Educators, 777 Kolani St, Wailuku 96793; 808-242-8225
The Tropical Homeschooler (newsletter), c/o Pinsky, 220 Waipalani Rd, Haiku, Maui 96708; 808-572-9289

IA: Iowa Families for Christian Education, RR 3 Box 143, Missouri Valley 51555
Iowa Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 213, Des Moines 50301

ID: Home Educators of Idaho, 3618 Pine Hill Dr, Coeur d'Alene 83814; 208-667-2778
Idaho Home Educators, PO Box 4022, Boise 83711-4022; 208-482-7336

IL: HOUSE, c/o Mary Friedl, 1331 Cleveland, Evanston 60202
Illinois Christian Home Educators, PO Box 261, Zion 60099

IN: LEARN, 7633 Shilo Rd, Unionville 47468 (Bloomington area)
Southern IN Support Group, 118 E Water St, Princeton 47670; 812-385-4176
Wabash Valley Homeschool Assoc, c/o Palmer, 2515 E Quinn Av, Terre Haute 47805; 812-466-9467

KS: Christian Home Educators Confederation of Kansas, PO Box 3564, Shawnee Mission 66203
Hesston/Canton Home Educators Assoc, 316-367-8205
Lawrence Area Unaffiliated Grp of Homeschoolers, c/o Michener, RR 1 Box 496, Perry 66073
Manhattan Parent Educators, 913-539-3641
Wichita Teaching Parents, 316-264-9063

KY: Kentucky Home Education Assoc, PO Box 81, WInchester 40392-0081

STATES L-M

LA: Louisiana Citizens for Home Education, 3404 Van Buren, Baker 70714; 504-775-5472
Southwest Acadiana Homeschoolers, 507 S. Arenas, Rayne 70578; 318-334-2812

ME: Maine Homeschool Association, PO Box 9715-199, Portland 04104
Sebago Lake Homeschoolers Support Grp, RR 2 Box 54, Sebago Lake 04075; 207-642-4368
Southern Maine Home Education Support Grp, 25 Belmeade Rd, Portland 04101; 207-774-7053

MD: Maryland Home Education Assoc, 9085 Flamepool Way, Columbia 21045; 410-730-0073
Montgomery Co Support Group, 26824 Howard Chapel Dr, Damascus 20872-1247; 301-253-5467
North County Home Educators, 303 Royale Dr, Baltimore 21226
Parents for Home Education, 13020 Blairmore St, Beltsville 20705; 301-572-5827

MA: Apple Country Homeschooling Assoc, PO Box 246, Harvard 01451; 508-456-8515
Berkshire Homeschoolers Grp, 217 Old State Rd, Berkshire 01224; 413-443-1770
Franklin Co Families for Home Ed, 413-625-6566
Greater Boston Home Educators, 617-246-2059 (Wakefield)
Homeschoolers of Mass. Education Club (Boston area), 60 Parkway Rd, Newton02160; 617-489-3275
Kitchen School Group, PO Box 96, W Boxford 01885; 617-352-2023
Mass Home Learning Assoc, PO Box 1976, Lenox 01240; 413-637-2169
Metro West Homeschoolers, 379 Concord Rd, Marlboro 01752; 508-485-2949
North Shore Support Grp, 508-468-4663 or 508-658-8970
South Shore Homeschoolers, 87 Snell Av, Brockton 02402; 508-588-1529
Worcester Area Homeschooling Organization, 246 May St #2, Worcester 01602; 617-755-9553

MI: Bay City Homeschooling Support Grp, 517-893-7608
Information Network for Christian Homes, 4150 Ambrose NE, Grand Rapids 49505
Learning Tree Resource Center, Box 80-B S Superior Rd RR 1, Atlantic Mine 49905 906-482-6393
Sunnyridge Alternative Learning Ctr, HCO 1 Box 134, Pelkie 49958

MN: Families Nurturing Lifelong Learners, 2452 Southcrest Av, Maplewood 55119
Fargo-Moorehead Homeschool Assoc, 1909-8th St S, Moorehead 56560
Home-Based Educators Accrediting Assoc, Rt 1 Box 381, Cambridge 55008
Minnesota Homeschool Alliance, PO Box 281, Maple Plain 55359; 612-491-2828
Minnesota Home School Network, 3669 E 123rd, Hastings 55033; 612-437-3049

MS: Home Educators of Central Mississippi, c/o McDonald, 109 W Willow Ct, Ridgeland 39157; 601-366-5218

MO: Families for Home Education, 4400 Woods Rd, Sibley 64088
Home Schooling Network, 47 Clermont Ln, St Louis 63124
Ozark LORE Society, c/o Eisenmann, HC 73 Box 160, Drury 65638; 417-679-3391 (Ozark area grp)
Springfield Area Homeschoolers, Rt 1 Box 193, Fair Grove 65648
St Louis South County Support Group, 601 Madison, Arnold 63010

MT: Flathead Valley Homeschoolers Assn, Kalispell, 892-4052, 755-2036
The Grapevine (Montana Homeschool News), 1702 Hwy 83 North, Seeley Lake 59868; 406-754-2481
Homeschoolers of Montana, PO Box 654, Helena 59624-0654
Montana Homeschoolers Assoc, PO Box 95, UM MT 59485-0095

STATES N-O

NE: LEARN, 7741 E Avon Ln, Lincoln 68505; 402-464-8551
Nebraska Indep. Homeschoolers Network, 8010 Lillibridge St, Lincoln 68506
OPEN, 7930 Raven Oaks Dr, Omaha 68152; 402-572-8515
Prairie Christian Home Schools, Rt 3 Box 73, Ord 68862

NV: Home Schools United/Vegas Valley, PO Box 26811, Las Vegas 89126; 702-870-9566

NH: New Hampshire Alliance for Home Education, PO Box 4541, Manchester 03108
New Hampshire Home School Coalition, PO Box 2224, Concord 03302
New Hampshire Home Schools Newsletter, PO Box 97, Center Tuftonboro 03816

NJ: Families Learning Together, 11 Bates Rd, Jackson 08527; 201-367-5012
Homeschoolers of South Jersey, Rt 2 Burnt House Rd, Vincentown 08088
Hunterdon Home Education News, RD 1 Box 352, Frenchtown 08825
Jersey Shore Christian Homeschoolers Assoc, 65 Middlesex Rd, Matawan 07747-3030
NJ Family Schools Assoc, RD 3 Box 208, Washington 07882
North Jersey Home Schoolers Assoc, 44 Oak St, Hillsdale 07642; 201-666-6025
Roots and Wings, RD 4 Box 126E, Boonton Twp 07005
Sussex County Home Education Organization, 875-6178
The Tutor, 1239 Whitaker Av, Millville 08332; 609-825-4770
Unschoolers Network, 2 Smith St, Farmingdale 07727; 201-938-2473
Unschooling Fams. Support Grp of Central NJ, RD 1 Box 713, Jobston 08041; 609-723-1524

NM: Glorieta Family Educators, Star Rt 1 Box 404, Glorieta 87535
New Mexico Family Educators, PO Box 92276, Albuquerque 87199-2276

NM Christian Home Education, 7417 Santa Fe Trail NW, Albuquerque 87120
Santa Fe Learning Cooperative, 2463 Camino Capitan, Santa Fe, 87505
NY: Families for Home Education, 5458 Oxbow Rd, Cazenovia 13035
Fingerlakes Unschoolers Network, 249 Coddington Rd, Ithaca 14850; 607-277-6300
Home Education Exchange of the Southern Tier, RD 2 Box 244, Grippen Hill Rd, Vestal 13850
Home Education Network of New York, 275 Yarmouth Rd, Rochester 14610
Home Schoolers Exchange, RD 1, Box 172E, E Chatham 12060; 518-392-4277
Homeschoolers Network of the Mid-Hudson Valley, RD 2 Box 211P, Ski Run Rd, Bloomingburg NY 12721; 914-733-1002
Long Island Homeschoolers Assoc, 4 Seville Pl, Massapequa Park 11762; 516-795-5554
Loving Education At Home, PO Box 332, Syracuse 13205-0332; 518-337-6019
New York City Home Educators Alliance, c/o Theresa Morris, 341 E 5th St, New York 10003; 212-505-9884
Rochester Area Homeschoolers Assoc, 275 Yarmouth Rd, Rochester 14610; 716-271-0845
Western NY Homeschooling Network, 119 Cook Av, Jamestown 14701; 716-483-1839
NC: Families Learning Together, 68 Lakey Creek, Franklin 28734 704-369-6491
North Carolinans for Home Education, 204 North Person St, Raleigh 27601; 919-834-NCHE
ND: North Dakota Home School Assoc, PO Box 486, Mandan 58554; 701-448-9193 or 448-2602
OH: Christian Home Educators of Ohio, PO Box 1224, Kent 44240
Christian Parents Assoc, 310 Bluebonnet Dr, Findlay 45840 (local only)
Growing Together, c/o Nancy McKibben 1676 Trendril Ct, Columbus 43229
Home-Based Education League of Parents, PO Box 98, Perrysburg 43551; 1-800-582-9061
Home School Network of Greater Cincinnati, 642 Romohr Acres, Cincinnati 45244; 732-6355
Home School Resource Ctr, 1444 Gurley Ave, Akron 44310; 216-633-3160
Ohio Coal. of Educational Alternatives Now, PO Box 094, Thompson 44086
Ohio Home Educators Network, PO Box 23054, Chagrin Falls 44023-0054; 216-543-5644
OK: Cornerstone, 1148 S Owasso Av, Tulsa 74120
The Family Learning Connection, PO Box 1938, Durant 74702
Learning All Ways, 7 Canyon Oaks Dr, McLoud 74851; 405-388-5979
OK Central Home Educators Consociation, PO Box 270601, OKC 73137
Oklahoma Christian Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 471032, Tulsa 74147-1032
OR: Avalos Learning Center, PO Box 70778, Eugene 97401
Douglas County Homeschoolers Connection, 4053 Hanna St, Roseburg 97470
Homeschoolers of Lane County, 38040 Pengra Rd, Fall Creek 97438; 503-937-2271
Homeschool Political Action Committee and **Homeschool Chautauqua**, 5360 SW 192 Av, Aloha 97007; 503-649-1110
The Learning Connection, PO Box 1091 #196, Grants Pass 97526; 503-476-5686
Oregon Home Education Network, 100 SE Spokane #27, Portland 97202; 503-238-1069
Parents Education Assoc, PO Box 1482, Beaverton 97075; 503-645-3709
People Assisting the Challenge of Home-Study, c/o Craig, 22215 SW Jaquith Rd, Newberg 97132
Willamette Homeschoolers, 245 W 27th Av, Eugene 97405

STATES P-W

PA: Chester County Homeschoolers, PO Box C, Paoli 19301
Endless Mountains Homeschoolers (N Central PA), c/o Kellogg, RD 3 Box 80, Columbia Cross Rds 16914; 717-549-8179
Pennsylvania Home Education News, RD 3 Box 256B, Tarentum 15084
Pennsylvania Homeschoolers, RD 2 Box 117, Kittanning 16201; 412-783-6512
RI: Home Spun News, 4 Sherwood Av, Warwick 02888; 401-781-5977
Parent Educators of RI, PO Box 782, Glendale 02826
RI Guild of Home Teachers, 272 Pequot Av, Warwick 02886; 401-737-2265
Rhode Islanders for Constitutional Education, 1 Solar St, Providence 02903; 401-861-9685
SC: Carolina Family School Assoc, 3200 Fernandina Rd #103F, Columbia 29210-5245
SD: South Dakota Home School Assoc, PO Box 882, Sioux Falls 57101
TN: Home Education Assoc of Tenn (HEAT), 3677 Richbriar Ct, Nashville 37211
Homeschooling Families, c/o Lesch, 888 Shadden Rd, Gray TN 37615
TX: Austin Area Homeschoolers, 6502 Bradley Dr, Austin 78723
Family Home Educators of Dallas, 214-840-8342
Home-Oriented Private Education for Texas, PO Box 43887, Austin 78745-0018; 512-280-4673
North Texas Self-Schoolers, c/o Jordan, 150 Forest Ln, Double Oak/Lewisville 75067; 817-430-4835
Texas Homeschool Coalition, 806-797-4927
UT: FCLA Utah Spice Group, 1510 W 500 N, Provo 84601; 801-377-4728
Utah Home Education Association, 1099 S 200 E, Farmington 84054; 801-488-3676
VT: Life is Valuable Education, RR 2 Box 289B, St Albans 05478; 802-527-1674
Vermont Homeschoolers Assoc, c/o Liz Swift, PO Box 161, Pittsford 05763 802-483-6296
VA: Blue Ridge Area Network for Congenial Homeschoolers (BRANCH), Rt 3 Box 602, Afton 22920; 703-456-9822
Home Educators Assoc of VA, PO Box 1810, Front Royal 22630-1810; 703-635-9322
Home Educators Network, 3320 Waverly Dr, Fredericksburg 22401
Home Instruction Support Group, 217 Willow Terr, Sterling 22170
Northern VA Homeschoolers/LEARN, 47756 Fathom Pl, Sterling 20165; 703-444-3455
WA: Clark Co. Home Educators, 28823 NW Main St, Ridgefield 98642; 206-887-3042
Families Learning Together, Box 10 Tiger Star Rt, Colville 99114
Family Academy, 146 SW 153rd #290, Seattle 98166
Family Learning Organization, PO Box 7256, Spokane 99207-0256; 509-467-2552
Homeschoolers' Support Assoc, PO Box 413, Maple Valley 98038; 206-432-9805
Rainbow Way Playgroup, 5004 20th Av NW, Seattle 98107; 206-782-3071
Teaching Parents Assoc, 16427 28th Dr SE, Bothell 98012; 206-483-6642
Washington Homeschool Organization, 18130 Midvale Av N, Seattle 98133; 206-546-9483; 206-298-8942
Whatcom Homeschool Assoc, 595 Trout Lake Rd, Bellingham 98226
WV: Alternatives in Education, Rt 3 Box 305, Chloe 25235; 304-655-7232
Christian Home Educators of West VA, PO Box 266, Glenville 26351; 304-462-8296
West VA Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 3707, Charleston 25337-3707; 304-733-4735
WI: Families in Schools at Home (FISH), 4639 Conestoga Trail, Cottage Grove 53527
HOME (Madison Chapter), 5745 Bittersweet Pl, Madison 53705; 608-238-3302
Wisconsin Parents Assoc, PO Box 2502, Madison 53701
WY: Wyoming Homeschoolers, Box 1386, Lyman 82937

National or General Homeschool Groups

Alternative Education Sources, PO Box 172, Unionville IN 47468
Basic Education, PO Box 610589, D/FW Airport TX 75261; 214-462-1909
Catholic Home School Newsletter, 688 11th Ave NW, New Brighton MN 55112
Christian Life Workshops, 180 SE Kane Ave, Gresham OR 97030
Creative Learning Magazine, 473 Billy Mitchell Rd #3, San Antonio TX 78225-1820
The Drinking Gourd (African American homeschoolers), PO Box 2557, Redmond WA 98073
Family Centered Learning Alternatives, HCR 63 Box 713, Naselle WA 98638; 206-484-3252
Growing Without Schooling, 2269 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge MA 02140
Home Education Press, PO Box 1083, Tonasket WA 98855; 509-486-1351
Home Education Workshops, Homesteading School, RD 2 GW, Oxford NY 13830
Home Educators Single Parent Network, NHA, PO Box 290, Hartland MI 48353-0290; 313-632-5208
Home Educators Computer Users Group, 26824 Howard Chapel Dr, Damascus MD 20872-1247; 301-253-5467
Home School Gazette, PO Box 359, Burtonsville MD 20866; 301-421-1473
Home School Legal Defense Assoc, PO Box 159, Paeonian Springs VA 22129; 703-338-5600
Home School Researcher, Western Baptist College, 5000 Deer Park Dr SE, Salem OR 97301-9392
Homeschool Associates of New England, 116 Third Av, Auburn ME 04210; 207-777-0077
Homeschoolers for Peace, PO Box 74, Midpines CA 95345
Homeschoolers Travel Network, NHA, PO Box 290, Hartland MI 48353-0290; 313-632-5208
Islamic Homeschool Assoc of North America, 1312 Plymouth Ct, Raleigh NC 27610
Jewish Home Educators Newsletter, c/o Ernstoff, 2 Webb Rd, Sharon MA 02067
Nat'l Assoc of Mormon Home Educators, 2770 S 1000 West, Perry UT 84302
Nat'l Center for Home Education, PO Box 200, Paeonian Spgs VA 22129; 703-338-7600
Nat'l Handicapped Homeschoolers Assoc, 814 Shavertown Rd, Boothwyn PA 19061; 215-459-2035
Nat'l Home Education Research Institute, Western Baptist College, 5000 Deer Park Dr SE, Salem OR 97301-9392
Nat'l Homeschool Association, PO Box 290, Hartland MI 48353-0290; 313-632-

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Nat'l Homeschool Service, PO Box 167, Rodeo NM 88056; 505-557-2250
Nat'l Institute for Christian Home Education, Rt 3 Box 543, Rustburg VA 24588
SPECIAL (single-parent homeschoolers), 2 Pineview Dr, Amelia OH 45102
The Teaching Home, PO Box 20219, Portland OR 97220-0219
Umoja*Unidad*Unity (Homeschoolers of Color), 5621 S. Lakeshore Dr, Idlewild MI 49642

Homeschool Groups Outside of U.S.

Canada:

Alberta Home Education Assoc, c/o Aine Stasiewich, Box 3451, Leduc AB T9E 6M2
Calgary Home Eds Encouragement & Resource Society, RR 6, Calgary AB T2M 4L5
Canadian Alliance of Homeschoolers, 195 Markville Rd, Unionville, Ont L3R 4V8; 416-477-3641
Canadian Home Educators Assoc of BC, 4684 Darin Ct, Kelowna BC V1W 2B3; 604-764-7462
Cowichan Valley Homelearners Support Grp, RR 7, Duncan BC V9L 4W4
Cowichan Valley Christian Homelearners Support Grp, 1050 Marchmont Rd, Duncan BC V9L 2M7
Education Advisory, 2267 Kings Ave, W Vancouver BC V7V 2C1
Gabriolaa Homeschoolers, PO Box 223, Gabriola Island BC V0R 1X0
Greater Vancouver Home Learners Support Grp, 604-228-1939; 604-298-6710
Home Education News, Box 39009 Pt Grey RPO, Vancouver BC V6R 4P1
Home Learning Resource Centre, Box 61, Quathiaski BC V0P 1N0
Homeschoolers Assoc of Northern Alberta, 6311 14 Av, Edmonton T6L 1Y1
Manitoba Assoc for Schooling at Home, 89 Edkar Cres, Winnipeg R2G 3H8
Montreal Homeschoolers' Support Grp, 5241 Jacques Grenier, Montreal PQ H3W 2G8; 514-481-8435
New Brunswick Assoc of Christian Homeschoolers, RR 1 Site 11 Box 1, Hillsborough NB E0A 1X0; 506-734-2863
Nova Scotia Support Grp, c/o Laura Uhlman RR 1, Pleasantville NS B0R 1G0
Ontario Homeschoolers, Box 60, 260 Adelaide St E, Toronto M5A 1N0
Orilla Homeschoolers' Support Grp, 45 Albert St North, Orilla Ont L3V 5K3
Quebec Homeschooling Advisory, 4650 Acadia, Lachine, Que H8T 1N5; 514-637-5790
Saskatchewan Home-Based Educators, 116A Idylwyld Dr. N, suite 13, Saskatoon SK S7L 0Y7
Victoria Home Learning Network, 106-290 Regina, Victoria, BC V8Z 6S6
Yukon Home Educators' Society, 8 Normandy Rd, Whitehorse YT Y1A 3C5

Elsewhere:

Accelerated Christian Education, PO Box 10, Strathpine, Qld., Australia; 07 205 7503
Alternative Education Resource Group, 39 William St, Hawthorne, Victoria, 3122, Melbourne, Australia
Aprender Sin Escuela, Apartado 28198, Madrid 28080, Spain; (91) 528 01 07
Brisbane Homeschooling Group,Lot 2, Caboolture River Rd, Upper Caboolture 4510 Australia
Education Otherwise, 36 Kinross St, Leamington Spa, Warks, UK CV32 7EF; (0926) 886828
Homeschoolers Australia Pty Ltd, PO Box 346, Seven Hills 2147, NSW Australia
Les Enfants D'Abord, 18 Grde Rue, Valence 26000, France
NSW Central Coast Homeschool Grp, RMB 6346, MacDonalds Rd, Lisarow NSW 2250, Australia
The New Zealand Home Schooling Assoc, 5 Thanet Av, Mt Albert, Auckland, New Zealand
Panama Support Group, PSC Box 1578, APO Miami, Florida 34001 (Ft Amador, Panama)
Puerto Rico Homeschooling Assoc, 503 Barbe St, Santurce 00912 Puerto Rico
Sunshine Coast Homeschooling Grp, #40 Browns Rd, Belli Park via Edmundi, 4562 Queensland, Australia
World-Wide Educational Service, Strode House, 44/50 Osnaburgh St, London NW1 3NN England
Yarra Valley Homeschoolers, 9 Salisbury St, Warburton, Australia

Other Organizations

These educational, child-raising, or self-reliance organizations are good sources of help and allies. Again, a SASE is appreciated.
Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education, PO Box 59, E Chatham NY 12060-0059; 518-392-6900
Alternative Education Resource Organization, 417 Roslyn Rd, Roslyn Hghts NY 11577; 516-621-2195
EVAN-G, 977 Keeler Ave, Berkeley CA 94708 (corporal punishment)
La Leche League International, 9616 Minneapolis Av, Franklin Park IL 60131
Liedloff Continuum Network, White Elephant, 6 Issaquah, Waldo Pt. Harbor, Sausalito CA 94965; 415-332-1570 (people interested in the Continuum Concept)
Nat'l Assoc for the Legal Support of Alt. Schools, PO Box 2823, Santa Fe NM 87501; 505-471-6928
National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest), 342 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02139; 617-864-1410
Nat'l Coalition Of Alt. Community Schools, 58 Schoolhouse Rd, Summertown TN 38483; 615-964-3670
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Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Please try to write to the kids who are already listed before sending in your own name. When writing to pen-pals, be sure to put your own name and address *on your letter*, not just on your envelope.

To be listed here, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. STEPHENS, PO Box 838, Sewanee TN 37375: Marshall (6) cowboys, sports, violin; Tommy (3) cowboys, dinosaurs, violin ••• CLARK-GRAHAM, 3422 Providence Rd, Media PA 19063: Jessica (12) rock, reading, pen-pals; Dian (10) Pee Rats, poetry, rock ••• Tabitha KIRKLAND (7) 326 Lanipo Dr, Kailua HI 96734; reading, horses, swimming ••• IGNIZIO, 19504 Hiawatha Rd, Odessa FL 33556: Graham (12) diving, marksmanship, arts; Drew (9) cooking, carving, swimming; Claire (8) cooking, reading, flowers ••• WillyJane PATRY (14) RD 1 Box 2340, Fairfax VT 05454: art, animals, singing ••• Amber GOUSHE (11) PO Box 4883, Austin TX 78765; music, reading, skating ••• Acasia STRATT (11) 4233 St Clair Av, Studio City CA 91604: horses, soccer, cooking ••• DIAZ, Adams E-19 Parkville, Guaynabo, PR 00657: Amy (14) shopping, dating, music; Alexa (11) horses, sports, reading; Amanda (11) school, animals, health foods; Ashley (8) Barbies, sewing, skating ••• LANDRUM, 62541 Wagoner Hill Ln, Summerville OR 97876: Melyssa (14) fairy tales, reading, dancing; Laryssa (11) dance, piano, horses ••• Jordan WYATT (14) 9006 E Av T-2, Littlerock CA 93543: piano, reading, animals ••• SNODGRASS, 7550 E Av T-14, Littlerock CA 93543: Brian (14) kites, computers; Matthew (11) animals, sports, piano ••• Sarah KALIN (5) Oberdorfstrasse 32, 8953 Dietikon, Switzerland; painting, drawing, stuffed animals ••• DeMULDER, RD 2 Box 34, Unadilla NY 13849: Cheyenne (14) reading, herbs, writing; Rya (9) dance, skating, gymnastics; Sierra (6) art, letters, skating ••• Elizabeth CHANG (10) 343 Dale Ct, Benicia CA 94510; reading, camping, nature ••• Andy ERICKSON (11) 8 Tanager Ln, Chapel Hill NC 27514; soccer, magic, politics ••• Shiloh GRAHAM (12) 32410 El Sastre, Acton CA 93510; horses, piano, sports ••• HUSTON, 659 SE Harbor View Dr, Port St. Lucie FL 34983: JD (15) sailing, fishing, Scouts; Robin (10) fishing, hampsters, traveling; Mandy (9) cats, art, Barbies ••• Ashley WILKINSON (9) 34356 Highview Dr, Pine CO 80470: ballet, piano, trolls ••• Rachael MORAN (9) 3944 Bell St, Kansas City MO 64111: stamps, cats, music ••• Rebecca SEALFON (9) 34 Sidney Pl, Brooklyn NY 11201; reading, American Indians, writing ••• JENSEN, 212 Deerview Ct SE, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2J 6J9: Tammy-Lynn (17) drama, music, swimming; Ross (16) basketball, art, rapping; Patti-Ann (14) sports, reading, languages; Jackie-Sue (12) horses, drawing, swimming; Cathy-Lou (10) reading, writing, swimming; Remmington (8) sports, math, music ••• BARONE, 29050 St. Martins, Livonia MI 48152: Nino (16) karate, computer, guitar; Kristoffer (13) karate, guitar, basketball; Sean (11) karate, guitar, basketball; Jaclyn (8) ballet, bike, jump rope ••• CARTWRIGHT, 30 Centre Cres., Blaxland East 2774, Australia: Ashton (10) magic, computers, rocks; Christopher (9) gardening, gymnastics ••• ANACKER, 15227 Freeman Av, Lawndale CA 90260: Celeste (13) art, animals, nature; Heather (7) nature, arts, crafts ••• Ben STIRLING (6) PO Box 1108, Crystal Beach TX 77650; science, planes, fishing ••• Emily ROSE (9) 3911 Tamara Dr, Grove City OH 43123-2832; poetry, books, acting ••• Erin CLARK (9) 1301 Redbud, Aledo TX 76008: reading, writing, climbing trees

Subscriptions & Renewals

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How to Find Out About Homeschooling in Your Area

Here are some ways you can find out the legal situation in your state.

1) Look up the law yourself, in a public library or law library (courthouse, law school, etc.) Laws are indexed; try "school attendance" or "education, compulsory." Many states have revised their homeschooling laws since the early '80s, so check recent statute changes. We have printed or summarized these new laws in our back issues.

2) Ask the state department of education for any laws or regulations pertaining to homeschooling and/or starting a private school. In some states there are few regulations concerning private schools and so you can call your home a school.

3) Contact state or local homeschooling groups. This list is printed in full in this issue, and updates are printed in subsequent issues. The list is also sold separately for $2.50 as part of our "Homeschooling Resource List." Some groups have prepared handbooks or guidelines on legal matters. Often, these groups can tell you more about the legal climate in a state than anyone else can - whether new legislation is pending, for example, and how the present law is being enforced.

4) Contact other families listed in our Directory. This is particularly useful if you live in a state that leaves homeschooling decisions up to individual school districts. When you contact these families, help them by having done some research on your own first.

Other homeschoolers will also be able to answer many of your questions about homeschooling, and will let you know about meetings, field trips, and other activities.

5) In general, it is *not* wise to start by asking your local school district; they usually don't know the law either. Better to gather the facts first on your own.

When You Write Us

Please - (1) Put separate items of business on separate sheets of paper. (2) Put your name and address at the top of each letter. (3) If you ask questions, enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope. (4) Tell us if it's OK to publish your letter, and whether to use your name with the story. We edit letters for space and clarity.

Declassified Ads

Rates: 70¢/word, $1/word boldface. Please tell these folks you saw the ad in GWS.

FREE Science Magazine loaded with experiments. TOPS Ideas, 10970 S Mulino Rd, Canby OR 97013.

SHIMER COLLEGE seeks applications from homeschoolers. Four-year liberal arts curriculum. Small discussion classes. Intense student involvement. Early entrance option. POB A-500, Waukegan IL 60079. 708-623-8400.

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Jewish Home Educators Network provides information, resources, and support. For a free copy of our newsletter send a SASE (52¢) to Ernstoff, 2 Webb Rd, Sharon MA 02067.

FREE National Homeschool Association newsletter, conference report issue. 513-772-9580. Box 290, Hartland MI 48353-0290.

SOS FAMILY NEWSLETTER. SAMPLE $1. LEWIS, 1561 SAID, SEMMES AL 36575.

EXPLORING magazine from the **EXPLORATORIUM** investigates the science of the everyday world. Each issue explores a different subject: Rhythm, Electricity, Food, Nothing and more. Articles and activities. No advertising. Subscription: $18 (4 issues). Visa/MC 1-800-359-9899. 3601 Lyon St., San Francisco, CA 94123.

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San Jose, CA. My sons, 12 and 10, would like to start a companionship group. If interested call Cheryl Just 408-268-6378.

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Hard Times in Paradise, by David and Micki Colfax. How a family stood up for its beliefs, took risks, learned by jumping in and trying, and always involved the children in the family's work and decision-making. Hardcover. #1682, $19.95

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Mali Sastri is among those interviewed for this issue's Focus, "Publicizing Homeschooling," pages 19-23.

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Many of us who speak about homeschooling to newspaper reporters or who appear on television and radio shows seem to be ambivalent about this kind of publicity. On the one hand, we want to spread the word. On the other hand, we're afraid of being misrepresented or misunderstood. Almost every discussion among homeschoolers about doing publicity seems to express this ambivalence: "Well, it's helpful to show people that homeschoolers aren't freaks," we say, or "It's a good way to let other people know that they can homeschool, too." But we also say, "That article gave a distorted impression" or "Television doesn't allow you to speak in depth." We want to speak out, but we're sometimes frustrated by what happens when we do.

More and more these days, young people are joining their parents in speaking publicly about homeschooling. They are talking directly to newspaper reporters and appearing on radio and television shows. For this issue's Focus, we interviewed four homeschooled kids who have done publicity of some sort. They seem to feel ambivalent about it in much the way that adults do, but their enthusiasm for sharing their homeschooling with others and helping people know what is possible seems to overshadow their concerns. Mali Sastri says, "You can't just be off in your own world; you have to be involved in the politics, too, and in trying to have other people understand you." Amanda Bergson-Shilcock talks about wanting people to understand what is wrong with traditional education and trying to change the existing stereotypes about kids who don't go to school. It's apparent that these kids feel something of a mandate to speak out, despite the occasional limitations of the media.

John Holt wrote in *Teach Your Own* about the value of individual people making changes in their own lives. He went on to say, "But are these kinds of small-scale personal changes political, that is, do they or could they help to bring about change in society as a whole? It depends. Are the things these people are doing things that many others, not rich nor powerful nor otherwise unusual, could do if they wanted, without undue risk or sacrifice? And are these people, as they change their lives, telling others about what they are doing and how they might also do it? Private action, however radical or satisfying, only becomes political when it is made known."

Using the mainstream media is certainly not the only way to speak out, and indeed other ways might sometimes be less frustrating. One state newsletter, for example, tells about kids creating a county fair project to inform their community about homeschooling. But no matter how they go about it, it is noteworthy that these homeschooled kids feel the impulse to do more than just make a private choice. They want to make that choice known, and thus, perhaps, to bring about change in the lives of others. — Susannah Sheffer

News & Reports

Everyone loves the Tin-Tin books!

Office News & Announcements

It's time once again to give our annual (and heartfelt) thanks to our customers for making this holiday rush season successful for John Holt's Book and Music Store, and we commend our shipping staff for the way they handled the volume of orders.

We're still interested in receiving good photos of kids, or kids and adults doing things together, for artist Emily Linn to use in her drawings. Also, thanks very much to all the state homeschooling groups that send us newsletters. Over the years we have always relied on these newsletters for information, and we continue to do so, so we appreciate your keeping us on your mailing lists. Some states from which we *don't* hear much news these days are Colorado, Delaware, Washington DC, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nevada, Oklahoma.

Homeschoolers and Libraries

[PF:] We published a survey in GWS #83 about homeschoolers and library use. We received 44 responses, which is pretty good considering we required you to mail the surveys back to us at your own expense. Some people chose not to answer all the questions, so not every question has a 100% response rate. However, the fact that nearly all the responses were accompanied by detailed letters about homeschoolers and library use (some as long as 6 pages!) indicates a strong commitment on the part of the respondents to their local libraries. I am using many of the detailed responses you sent to me in an article for *Public Library Magazine*, as well as in a talk I'll give at the American Library Association conference in New Orleans in June. Thanks to Ginger Fitzsimmons for tabulating the responses.

Here are the questions as we printed them in GWS, followed by the responses we received:

"Below is a list of services and materials that libraries could offer to homeschoolers. With regard to each one, please circle 'use' if it is available in your local library and you do make use of it; 'don't use' if it is available but you haven't used it; 'not available' if it isn't available but you would like it to be.

1) Homeschool Vertical File packet: includes local and state regulations and laws, local homeschooling groups, basic bibliographies and articles culled from the popular press, school district phone numbers, addresses and names.

Use: 11% Don't Use: 18% NA: 59%

2) Library tours to individual families or groups.

Use: 34% Don't Use: 50% NA: 14%

3) Workshops on how to use different catalogs, encyclopedias, databases, etc.

Use: 18% Don't Use: 39% NA: 34%

4) Curriculum guides from local school districts.

Use: 2% Don't Use: 18% NA: 73%

Curriculum guides are the most unavailable resource in the survey, though they would appear to be very useful to all homeschoolers. As one respondent noted, "While I do not conform to the idea of using a school curriculum as a guide for my own child's learning I would like to have them available to me when I am curious about specific milestones and how they are approached in public schools."

5) Displays of homeschoolers' projects - art works, science fairs, student writing, etc.

Use: 16% Don't Use: 23% NA: 50%

6) Do you and/or your children do volunteer work for your public library?

Yes: 30% No: 52% Would volunteer if library allowed it: 18%

7) What library books and materials do you use the most in homeschooling?

The ten most cited ones were:

Children's fiction and non-fiction, including classics and easy readers; Video tapes; Biographies; Books about homeschooling; History; Magazines; Audio cassettes; Books on games, toys, projects; Science books; Inter-library loan service.

8) What books and materials do you want your library to get to help you with homeschooling? The ten most cited ones were:

Growing Without Schooling (not surprising given who the respondents were); Educational Videos; Home Education Magazine; Books from our mail-order catalog, John Holt's Book and Music Store (again, the bias of our readers is evident here!); John Holt's books; Dr. Raymond Moore's books; Curriculum guides/books; tied for tenth place were: Christian homeschooling materials, particularly books by Mary Pride; Math and Science materials; Homeschooling books in general.

9) What I like best about our library is... The ten most cited things were:

Friendly, helpful staff; Inter-library loans; Good selection of children's books and materials; Friendly environment; Well-organized children's programs; Use of room for homeschooling meetings; One

We were very sorry to learn of the death of long-time homeschooler Suzy Dodd this past November. Lin Kemper-Wallace sent us this memorial tribute:

Suzy Elmore Dodd was born in Cumberland County, TN on February 28, 1947. She died in her home in Oliver Springs, TN on November 11, 1992. Her death was sudden, unexpected, and of unknown natural causes.

She leaves behind her four wonderful children: Mike (21), Erin (18), Amy (14), and Levi (10). They are her proof that homeschooling and good mothering can produce outstanding citizens.

Many homeschoolers in Tennessee knew Suzy as the expert to call for information, suggestions, input, or a fresh point of view. She didn't give advice, but she shared her experiences, as well as her unique perspective. Because of her charm, warmth, enthusiasm, and excellent communication skills, she was able to touch many people's lives; her impact on homeschooling was far-reaching, not only within Tennessee but throughout the United States.

John Holt wrote that a good leader is someone who makes others feel that they can be leaders. If that is true, and I believe it is, then Suzy was a great leader. She helped people realize that schooling is not a difficult and complex undertaking to be handled only by experts. It can be the simple process of trusting your children's inherent desire to conquer their world, standing back and allowing them to unfold and learn at their own pace, in their own time, not on a schedule predetermined by a committee of strangers in a conference room.

Suzy was outstanding in many ways. Two things that always impressed me about her were her tremendous love and empathy for children (all children, even the ones who are difficult to love), and her ability to think on her feet - to speak coherently, concisely, and with a smile on her face, even in a controversial discussion. Whenever I think of Suzy, I can hear her happy laugh, see her bright smile, and feel her loving warmth. It was a pleasure to have her in my life.

The children are now living with their father and stepmother in Oak Ridge. They miss their mom, but they are adjusting. A memorial fund has been set up for them. If you would like to contribute, donations can be sent to Suzy Dodd Memorial Fund, Home Federal Bank, 1175 Oak Ridge Turnpike, Oak Ridge TN 37830.

month or longer loan period; No limit to number of books you can check out; Interest in homeschooling; Periodicals to check out.

10) What I like least about our library is... The ten most cited things were:

Librarians who are unfriendly, intrusive, or otherwise difficult; Budget cuts; Not enough space; Lack of materials; Disposing of card catalogs in favor of computer systems; Throwing away or burning books; Services not well-publicized; Not enough Christian materials; Limited hours; Catalogs don't reference (or cross-reference) homeschooling as a topic.

Working with City School District

Linda Ozier wrote in the November 1992 newsletter of the Massachusetts Home Learning Association about her relationship with the Boston School District. We'd like to hear more about homeschoolers' relationships with big city school districts, since this is something reporters ask us about. Here's an excerpt from Linda's letter:

The noticeably different aspect of our homeschooling in Boston has been the extent to which we have worked *with* the schools. In Virginia our neighborhood school principal didn't know we existed, but here both the elementary and middle school principals know us on sight. Drew (8) has attended a weekly computer class at his school for two years and though Owen (13) didn't choose to participate in any classes, he did all his testing at the middle school office and was invited to participate in his class's graduation (which he did).

Though the schools are supposed to provide any textbooks we request that are ordinarily used in the grade in question, we have borrowed very few textbooks (and those we did we used very little). But when I requested general curriculum information, we found a marvelous resource at the middle school in its director of curriculum and instruction. She gave me all the curriculum guides for K-8 (for use until Drew was done), suggested an outstanding math series, gave me an examination copy of a science text with all the acommpanying posters, workbooks, and tests (for keeps), and best of all she referred us to the head of science instruction for Boston. This person in turn gave us a dissecting pan, goggles, and two preserved frogs for dissecting. When I requested suggestions for high school science books, instead of a bibliography I got two each of biology, chemistry, and physics texts. Again these were examination copies and are mine to keep. Though they may not be the last word in science instruction, they are still valuable resources. I was overwhelmed.

When I made a similar attempt at seeking out the next book in the high school math series for Owen, the head of math instruction wasn't so helpful, referring me instead to Owen's high school, which at the time was still to be determined. Help arose from an unexpected source, though. Owen has been a regular guest on the Boston Public Schools *Extra Help* homework help program on cable TV and has established a great rapport with the teacher and crew. When I noticed the math texts that I was seeking were in the bookcases on the set, I asked if I could look at them while Owen was on the show, so I could decide if I wanted to order them or not. At the end of the show, the producer said I was welcome to take them since they were just props (more examination copies). Another $75 saved!

The next stage of our homeschooling adventure began this fall when Owen started high school homeschooling. His high school happens to be the one where the *Extra Help* math teacher is the head of the math department, so we have a supplementary math resource. We also met with the principal and the chemistry teacher to arrange a regular lab experience for Owen this fall. In addition, he is participating in computer and math class. He is able to go in for the latter half of the day and participate in these classes. He is very happy with this arrangement.

Allies in the Gifted Education Community

[PF:] Kathi Kearney, founder of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in South Casco, Maine, sent us the September/October 1992 issue of *Understanding Our Gifted* (PO Box 18268, Boulder, CO 80308-8268). The entire issue focuses on homeschooling gifted children but it includes useful information for all parents and children. I firmly believe that all children are gifted and talented but that their unique gifts and talents often go unrecognized in school. However, a glance through this issue of *Understanding Our Gifted* provides parents of "normal" or "average" children with yet another ally in our fight to expand homeschooling as an educational option, and it gives us much food for thought and ammunition to use with schools regarding how best to help our children learn and grow. Indeed, I was struck when reading many of the articles how the arguments put forth for the gifted are the very ones GWS has been making for fifteen years on behalf of all children. For instance, the lead article by Patricia Linehan contains the following:

"...Gifted primary children, particularly highly gifted children, are at a genuine disadvantage entering the average public school system... ...they will probably face the same readiness activities as the average kindergartner: 'letter of the week' and a seemingly endless supply of sequencing and classifying and coloring activities. Without a flexible, differentiated curriculum, such children are at best bored. Without an astute teacher, such children are at risk. What is the effect on the child?

"...Homeschooling parents of gifted students must be fully aware that they, too, can squash their own child's intense desire to learn by shifting the worst rather than the best of public school to the kitchen table. Buying a standard commercial curriculum and just stepping up the pace quite likely will not provide the true differentiation gifted learners need. It is crucial to remember that gifted children crave to explore topics and concepts in depth, frequently refusing to move on until their curiosity is satiated.

"Homeschooling a gifted primary child offers the opportunity to tailor an entire learning environment to the gifted child's areas of interest. Centering a curriculum upon those interests will provide the depth needed while facilitating the learning of the 'basics.'"

Other interesting articles in this newsletter are one on how to keep a home portfolio of children's work and a great little piece about the difference between social development and socialization, which says that the former is "a deep, comfortable level of self acceptance that leads to true friendships with others," and that socialization is "the ability to adapt to the needs of the group." Notes author Linda Silverman, "...the remarkable emphasis on the school as an agent of socialization makes one wonder if anyone really cares about the development of these children's abilities or if all that is important is whether they *fit in*!"

Homeschooler and current Harvard undergraduate Elye Alexander writes a wonderful piece about his growing up and learning at home in Vermont, and Kathi Kearney provides some interesting data about homeschooling highly gifted children: "Meadows, Abel & Karnes (published in 1992 in *Rural Educator*, 13 (3), 14-17), in their survey of the families of 40 homeschooled children in rural Mississippi, found that 20% of these families listed 'to meet the needs of a highly intelligent child' as their highest priority for choosing homeschooling. In an unpublished study of 46 children in the 148-200+ IQ range, I found that 22% of the children were currently homeschooling (Kearney, 1992). Surprisingly, almost half the group - 43% - had been homeschooled at some point during grades kindergarten through 12."

While I was thinking about this newsletter and the issue of gifted children I read an article in the *Boston Globe* (12/10/92) with the headline: "Learning program postulates that all students are gifted." It went on to describe the work of Stanford University professor Henry M. Levin:

"Levin, an economist by trade, said he created 'accelerated learning' after visiting schools to study the rising rate of latchkey children. He said he was shocked when he saw students treated as if they were 'dumb' and equally shocked at how

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quickly those students internalized the message.

"Accelerated learning works by engaging students instead of boring them through rote work such as repeated vowel and consonant pronunciations, Levin said. He suggests that educators challenge students by finding out what interests them.

"'You get kids involved in discourse. You allow them to ask questions and you read to them. You get them to understand new vocabulary, I mean the big words, and then get them using it through writing,' Levin said. 'By then, they are so absorbed and confident that they want to tackle reading.'

"The approach focuses on higher-order thinking that respects students as human beings, Levin said...

"Levin also calls upon parents and a school's community to make a commitment equal to that of the students in order to promote the best possible learning environment. The result, within five to six years, is schools full of children who once were two or more years behind grade level but "accelerate" to at or above grade level, Levin said. ...

"'We build upon all the talent in the school,' Levin said. 'We embrace language and say that all teachers are language teachers. So that art teachers bring in new vocabulary and physical education teachers give writing assignments. And all teachers teach thinking skills. The challenge is to ask what we can do accelerate a child's progress, just as we have always done for our talented and gifted students.'"

German Family Still Struggling

An update from Renata Leuffen ("Fighting for Rights in Germany," GWS #89):

We are now in London, far away from Dusseldorf in Germany. We had to flee to avoid getting murdered in madhouses. We were separated from our possessions, our family, our friends. In fact, Germany's strange compulsory school attendance law has expelled us from our own people and home country.

On August 25, 1992 the authorities built a new lock into the door of our apartment, thus locking me out. On November 6, when we were living in England, the German authorities wanted to deport my son from London to a home in Germany. They contacted Interpol London, and the English police refused the request.

As German homeschoolers we became homeless refugees. All my parental rights were taken away while I was absent. The court orders are to be enforced all over Germany. England has not ratified the conventions on child deportation. Several English lawyers have assured me that no English judge would sentence me because I am teaching my son at home. Every English lawyer knows it's legal to teach your own child.

At present I have an applicaton before the European Commission on Human Rights which will determine whether Germany was right to steal my parental rights and whether home education is a reason to put a child with force into a home.

I urge all readers to submit a petition to the General Secretary of the Council of Europe, concerning application no. 21001/92, c/o Council of Europe, PO Box 431 R6, 67006 Strasbourg-Cedex, France. Unfortunately, I do not have enough money to contact a lawyer in London. If some readers are able to make donations, please send them in a letter well wrapped to my address: 6 Stanmore Rd, London N15 3PS, England. I cannot beat Germany myself, but need help. In Germany no lawyer is willing to go against the state to defend me, but a German lawyer in London is willing to help if I can afford the fee.

Calendar

A • before an event means that Holt Associates will be there — with a speaker and/or with books for sale.

• March 13, 1993: Holt Associates Homeschooling Information Fair in the Boston area. Nancy Wallace and others will be speaking. Call or write for details.

• March 27: Maryland Home Education Association conference in Takoma Park, MD. For information: Manfred Smith, 410-730-0073.

• April 3: Unschoolers Network conference in Princeton, NJ. For information: Nancy Plent, 908-938-2473.

April 4: Connecticut Home Educators Association convention in Madison, CT. John Gatto will be speaking. For information: Luz Shosie, 22 Wildrose Av, Guilford CT 06477; 203-458-7402.

April 23-24: Wisconsin Parents Association 10th annual conference on home education in Stevens Point. For information: WPA, PO Box 2502, Madison WI 53701; Melissa Rice 715-341-6378.

April 30-May 1: National Homeschool Association regional conference in central Massachusetts. For info: SASE to NHA, PO Box 290, Hartland MI 48353-0290; 513-772-9580 or 413-637-2169

• May 7-8: North Carolinians for Home Education conference in Winston-Salem, NC. For information: Spencer Mason, 704-541-5145.

May 7-8: La Leche League NYS West Area Parenting conference in Corning, NY. For info: M.C. Solomkin, 607-737-1118.

• May 14-15: Homeschool Associates of New England conference in Danvers, MA. For information: 207-777-0077.

• June 26: American Library Association conference in New Orleans, LA. For information: Susan Scheps, 216-991-2421.

We are happy to print announcements of major homeschooling events, but we need plenty of notice. Deadline for GWS #92 (events in May or later) is March 10th. Deadline for GWS #93 (events in July or later) is June 10th.

From Homeschooling to College

Penny Barker (OH) writes:

Last summer Maggie (19) read about the Wilderness/Civilization Institute in *Backpacker* magazine. The Institute is an honors program within the Forestry Department of the University of Montana. The article talked about the wildness in people and their connecting with this through a relationship with the wilderness. Maggie's life is spent primarily outside, and because she had been feeling the desire to connect with more people who do outdoor work, this sounded like a good match.

Since it was already June and the Institute was to begin in September, we knew we had to work quickly. Richard (Maggie's father) phoned the University of Montana and learned that there was one space left from the 28 offered, and that the decision on that final space would take place within the week. Richard gave one of the directors a verbal profile of Maggie, describing the program she runs for young teens, her uninstitutionalized upbringing, her work with her sled dogs, the family backpacking trips of which Maggie has always been a part. (The Wild/Civ program begins with a ten-day backpacking trip upon which the course work for the semester is built.) The Institute was willing to wait for Maggie's materials to arrive.

We worked quickly, with the efficient and astute help of Pat Montgomery and Kathy Sutherland at Clonlara (what a godsend those two have been as our three oldest have launched out of the family!). Clonlara sent the university their "graduation packet" which included a GED and their own 100-question graduation exit examination (Maggie had worked on these every day that week). Clonlara also translated Maggie's life experience into school subjects and grades. For years I have sent Clonlara records on all five of our kids. Richard and I had made hundreds of sheets that were headed with spaces for course subject and the child's name at the top. The body of the sheet had spaces for date, activity done, and the hours spent on the activity. We placed these in five notebooks with dividers labeled Language Arts; Writing; Arithmetic; Health; Biology; Animal Husbandry; Home Economics; Care of Environment; General Science; Geography, Geology, History; Government; Music; Art/Graphics; Physical Education; Community. At the end of each day I would write down a sentence (or less) describing everything each child had done that day in the various subject areas. The reason I made a lot of topic headings was to make it easy to fit each child's waking day into categories that could then be readily translated into hours toward a school requirement. Every single thing they did fit somewhere, so they had pretty extensive records. Periodically I'd photocopy it all and send it to Clonlara. Once or twice a year I'd write a general evaluation of how each of the children was faring, and from this Clonlara could evaluate, if necessary, the quality of the work in the various subject areas.

Geography, Geology, and History sheets got filled with lots during the winter when we went on our three-month long camping/backpacking sojourn, traveling through various parts of the country. Subjects such as arithmetic were covered through work with cooking (measuring), work with animals (feed, injections, weight, sales, profits, losses, etc.), work with maps (measurement, ratio), and were placed under other subject headings too. The quarter hour Maggie spent figuring out the number of cc's of antibiotic to administer to a sick sheep could go under Arithmetic, Animal Husbandry, and General Science with a quarter hour under each.

I really thought the people at the university would be disturbed with Maggie, but instead they praised her for knowing her own mind...They feel that Maggie's uninstitutionalized ubringing makes her an asset to their classes.

The sheet that seemed to fill most slowly was Government, since that was explored only when it came up in the context of a discussion we were having. The Language Arts section was filled with the titles of books that I read *to* the children at bedtime each night. So, though the younger four children did not read 'til they were from 11 to 14 years old, they had my nightly reading to fill this subject sheet.

As the children got to high-school age, I no longer kept such extensive written records, but wrote a periodic evaluation for Clonlara, and since they already had stacks of papers recording my children's modes and methods of learning, they could put these briefer sketches in context. Because Clonlara serves so many families now, they may require a more standard evaluation process, but I had been with them so long that a kind of ex post facto process existed, I think. It has served us extremely well, and though at one time it was a lot of record keeping for me, I liked it far better than following a curriculum or doing any testing. Like a lot of lucky homeschoolers, the first test my children ever took was the driver's license test.

Because of the honors nature of the program Maggie was applying to, we decided to further her chances of acceptance by putting together a portfolio containing a 15-minute video a Michigan TV station had done on Maggie last winter, an article Maggie had published when she was 14 dealing with the training of border collies, and photos of her work with young people dogtrekking in Michigan. This would confirm Maggie's ability to handle the outdoor aspect of the program as well as show her interest in and commitment to the natural environment.

An important part of Maggie's entrance requirements was an essay she had to submit dealing with the subject of wilderness and its place in our civilization. Maggie gathered ideas for the essay from everyone living at the farmstead that week: 22-year-old Cindy who had just graduated with an Environmental Studies degree from Williams College in Massachusetts, 15-year-old homeschooling friend Angela from West Virginia, whose thinking on the subject was lateral and refreshing, Maggie's three brothers, and Richard and me. She also got ideas from casual conversation with long-time homeschooling friends Bridget and Jaime. She sifted and sorted through these ideas.

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melding them with her own, and turned out a brief, to-the-point, splendid essay which I went over for punctuation. As discussed in GWS #88, the schools may consider this kind of community approach cheating, but I considered it Maggie using every resource at her disposal to clarify her own thinking, enabling her to come up with an essay that represented her own feelings, thoughts, and ideas on the subject.

Maggie was accepted into the program, which is the reason I'm sitting in the Montana mountains overlooking the beautiful Blackfoot River as I write this. Before you begin to think it sounds too smooth, let me mention some of the challenges that beset us along the way. First of all, Maggie could not give up her main work - her forty sled dogs which provide her income and are her passion. Our problem, then, was to settle not only Maggie in Montana but those forty dogs, and to make sure that Maggie would be able to continue to train them. This required trails!

Through diligent work on Richard's part, Maggie was able to find a 70-year-old Montana widow living out of town with whom she can room and where she can house her dogs. The widow lives in a cabin at the end of a road that opens onto all kinds of mountainous trails, where Maggie now trains her dogs and hears the bugling of the elk. Lots of her fellow students have asked to help with the dogs, which enhances Maggie's social life. The second week she was here, she was invited to a potluck supper where she chatted with Dave Foreman, founder of Earthfirst!, a renowned environmental activist group. This weekend she is at a three-day conference put on by the Alliance for the Wild Rockies. Though Maggie is not an activist, she is enjoying the stimulation of the people at these gatherings, is able to expand herself socially, attend the university, and still train her sled dogs.

Even before she arrived at the university, though, Maggie had the challenge of caravaning three full days, driving a 15-passenger van pulling a 15' canoe trailer since her brother Ben was eager to kayak and canoe the rivers out west. Richard drove Maggie's dog truck with its load of forty dogs across the Rockies, keeping in touch with Maggie's van through a CB that her youngest brother, Jonah, had rigged up for the journey. We camped all the way out to Montana, and Maggie had to spend five hours each day dealing with the needs of her dogs as well as doing all the driving of the van. This took a lot of concentration and stamina.

We arrived eight days after the beginning of classes and Maggie, who had never before been on a college campus (nor a high school or grade school campus) had to go into classes late as well as take care of all the processing necessary for her entrance into the university. I was surprised that she never had to take the SAT. This was due to the lateness of her decision to seek entry into the program.

After a week of classes Maggie came to us with some adamant news: "I can't possibly spend so many hours on course work and still have the time I need to condition my racing team!" She also felt that some of the courses she was required to take, though excellent, were redundant for her because of her upbringing (spending much time outdoors, living without electricity). She felt she had to make changes. She went to the various heads of the program and explained that she did not want to follow all of their requirements but was still eager to take particular courses from that department as well as pursuing her violin studies in the music department and taking a self-defense course from the Physical Education department for her protection in traveling alone in her dogtruck in the winter.

Because of my own conditioning in dealing with institutions, I really thought the people at the university would be disturbed with Maggie, but instead they praised her for knowing her own mind, invited her to take the classes she wanted, and have become her friends. They feel that Maggie's uninstitutionalized upbringing makes her an asset to their classes. It gave me a great feeling of confidence in the people at the University of Montana to know they really do have the best interests of the young people with whom they work at heart.

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Feeling Comfortable With School Children

These writers are responding to Ken Lipman-Stern's "Coping With Doubts," GWS #90.

Learning to Feel Proud

Amy Silverman of Virginia sent us a copy of a letter she wrote directly to Ken:

My daughter is 7, and would be in the middle of second grade this year. We live in a very rural part of Virginia, quite different from your New Jersey apartment complex, and yet we face some of the problems you describe - in my perfect world, there would be a lively, supportive homeschooling group with kids of similar ages (and adults who share my views) around here. In fact, the only homeschoolers we know are fundamentalist Christians (unlike us), none are the "right" sex and age, and we're all too busy to drive the long distances necessary to get together regularly anyway. However, here's the good news: I worried a lot more about this situation last year, when we officially started homeschooling, and Carson would have been entering first grade, like your Sam. After half a year or so - and you may be finding this as well, given that your letter seems to have been written a few months ago - it didn't seem to matter anymore. We just worked out our life to suit ourselves, taking advantage of opportunities as they arose, and dropping activities that didn't please us. At the same time, I stopped worrying all the time that I was doing or failing to do something critical; although I have always been a stalwart believer in John Holt-ism in theory, I was very unprepared for how scary it would be to do it in real life with a real child. I've stopped worrying so much partly because my daughter is the model unschooled child, throwing herself with total enthusiasm into all projects, academic and otherwise (she, of course, makes no distinction). She's doing so incredibly well in all aspects of her life that it's clear to me that when I worry she's missing something, it's my problem, not hers. It's just that homeschooling turns out to be so darned *easy* - it's so difficult for me to believe that all those professional educators spending billions of dollars on millions of kids are basically wasting their time.

I was surprised to read in your letter that the "horde" of boys and girls in your apartment building have been telling Sam that he won't learn anything at home; our experience with schooled kids is almost universally that they are jealous: "You're lucky! You don't have to go to school! You get to stay home with your mom!" etc. Maybe Sam has a little competitive thing going with one or two of these kids - very typical of 6-year-old boys, in my experience - who feel they have to prove that what they're doing is better. You may find that the older Sam's schooled friends get, the less enthusiastic they are about school; after all, first grade is still mostly fun, but it goes downhill from there. I liked your idea of discussing how everybody's different, and that you can be proud of your differences. I'd take it even a step further, though, and suggest that your way is *better*. "We homeschool because ___ (fill in the blank), and that's better than what they do in schools." You *do* think homeschooling is better, or you wouldn't do it. Six year olds are not ready for moral relativity; they want absolutes, and they want them from you.

She makes [homeschooling] sound like the greatest thing in the world, and people respond accordingly.

On the subject of "mainstream" friends, all of Carson's friends now go to school (there were several last year whose parents kept them out until second grade, but who have now started school). We see them after school and on weekends, which are Carson's times for socializing; days are time for "schoolwork" (we have a broad interpretation of that), hanging out with Mom, doing projects and errands, and lessons (she takes riding and piano lessons, once a week each). The lessons are great because she gets the experience of having different adults as teachers, and as homeschoolers we can do them in the morning when she's fresher instead of cramming them in after school like everyone else does. After school, she has Girl Scouts, which she started this year and adores; we go roller skating once a week with friends; one day a week she spends the afternoon with her second-best friend; and we are currently looking for an afternoon gymnastics class, something we did very successfully last year. On weekends, she usually spends at least one day with her best friend, often an additional day or half-day with another friend, and sometimes has a friend spend the night (we discovered the hard way she wasn't ready to spend the night out - driving to pick her up at 10:30 at night, for instance).

We worked this routine out, of course, after many trials and errors, and there are many more social-type activities we could take advantage of, even out here in the boondocks (for instance, 4-H) that we don't need. Also, since she has friends who go to private and public schools, which have different vacation schedules, it seems like someone's always on vacation or snowed in or it's summer again. I've discovered over the past year and a half that she doesn't need to socialize as much as I thought she did. Also, as she went from 6 to 7, she became much more capable of entertaining herself and working independently. Finally, this year she's started reading for pleasure, and half the time she has her nose buried in a "Ramona" book and doesn't want to be bothered anyway.

One thing that struck me about your letter was that it isn't clear if Sam has chosen, or been given the choice, to stay home or not. I've found that you can't impose child-led learning - it's a contradiction in terms, of course. If Sam would rather go to school, in my opinion you should let him go. Then, of course, it wouldn't be compulsory schooling, as John Holt pointed out. (Holt also pointed out that you wouldn't let your child play on a pile of nuclear waste even if he wanted to, but in my mind, school is not an unmitigated evil - some kids like it, and if he's choosing to go, isn't it child-led learning?) I promise you that this issue will arise again and again whether Sam continues to be homeschooled or not. You've got to have the strength to give him the freedom to choose what activities he'll participate in or the whole thing won't work (this doesn't include activities like brushing his teeth). The hardest thing about unschooling is leaving the child alone, trusting him to make choices that are right for him, and putting aside your own prejudices about what he should be interested in/good at. That doesn't mean letting him do whatever he wants. For instance, when Carson was getting whiney and resistant about practicing the piano, I sat down with her and her teacher and we talked about how piano is harder than it seems at first, and how nobody likes to practice. There were four weeks left in the semester, and we let her choose whether to continue or not. But I made it clear that if she did choose to continue, that would mean practicing every day without my prompting, and finishing out the semester. It was very scary for me, because I really wanted her to learn piano. I was afraid - and pretty sure - that she would quit. However, amazingly, she decided to continue, and the rest of the semester was a breeze.

Finally, and most importantly, I would give you this advice: wait; be patient; things will turn out. Maybe it'll take Sam a year to feel comfortable as a homeschooler. Maybe next year you'll be worried about something else, anyway; it's the price of non-conformity. By the way, Carson never says, "I don't go to school," when people ask, as they inevitably do.

"Where do you go to school?" or "Why aren't you in school?" She always says, "My mom teaches me at home, and I'm in second grade." She makes it sound like the greatest thing in the world, and people respond accordingly. Encourage Sam to brag about it; it's not pride and self-confidence that makes kids (and adults) insufferable, it's shame and self-doubt. Supply him with the words to use for bragging about how great it is if he can't come up with them on his own. You may think you are "sensing" Sam's "Why aren't I participating in everyone's common experience?" but it may be the opposite: he may just be picking up on your ambivalence. I'm not suggesting you lie, or fail to acknowledge his feelings; I'm just suggesting you take a stand, and then he will see how that's done.

You wrote so compellingly about Sam and your feelings that I was moved to write back. Good luck, and I hope you write again so we can all see how it turns out!

Pointing Out Benefits

Gail Nagasako (HI) writes:

In response to Ken Lipman-Stern, we, too, live surrounded by schooled children and went through a lot of what Ken is going through. I truly believe, though, that it is the parent who sets the tone and that once the parent has handled his or her own doubts, the child's dwindle. My doubts tend to surface toward the end of the "school year" when I must admit that I never did get around to most of the wonderful projects and learning activities that I envisioned in September. Then I wonder whether I am ruining my son's life by not making sure he knows what he ought to know. These doubts surface at other times of the year, too. But because I've read and reread John Holt, GWS, and other supportive literature and I've discussed these issues a lot with other unschoolers, my doubts are short-lived. This problem never becomes an issue for my son, though sometimes I am prompted to attempt some sort of schoolish pursuit for a while and my son bears with me on this for a short time before he helps set me back on course.

We weathered the storm of all my son's friends going off to school and telling him he should go too. I arrived at a standard patter: first I'd ask them if they liked school. Only about 20% said yes, so I'd ask them which they liked better, school or vacation. I'm sure the answer to that one is obvious to GWS readers. So my son saw that all the apparent enthusiasm for school was just hype. We also played school - I'd make him a lunch, then I'd put on a hat and become the bus driver and "drive him to school" (I'd drive around the block). Then I'd be the teacher and call roll. We'd do classes, have recess, and such. After about three or four days at the beginning of his kindergarten and first grade years, he'd feel he wasn't missing anything and would become bored of the game, and we'd be back to living real life again.

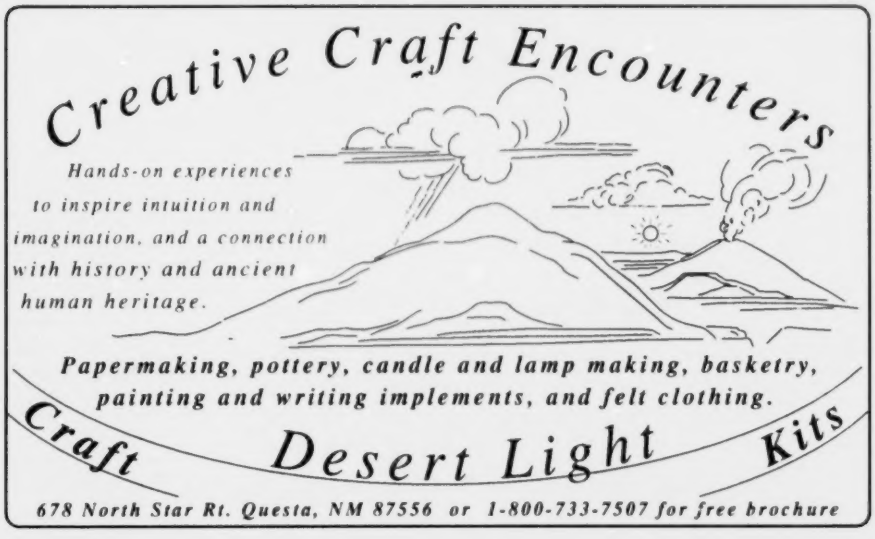
As time went on, my son's schooled peers became thoroughly indoctrinated into the idea that "you won't learn anything and you'll never get a job if you don't go to school." Some parents even tried to convince my son of this. But I just kept on top of it with my own "indoctrination" program - I'd point out to my son the things that he knew that the other kids didn't know. Then when he landed his first job at an antique store, sorting marbles for minimum wage, at the ripe old age of 9, he knew for sure that the job issue was hype, too.

Our society has a very extensive advertising campaign on the importance of school, so I've also been very active at promoting homeschooling to my son and at pointing out the ways in which he is lucky because he does it. When we're having a great time at the beach in the middle of the day, I'll say, "Gee, you could be in school right now." When there are a lot of kids at our house because their mothers didn't want the gang at their houses, I point out how lucky my son is that his mom loves having him around all the time. I mention how lucky he is that he isn't cooped up in a classroom, sitting at a desk. If the schooled kids are on the playground, I make a comment about their token twenty minutes outside, probably spent teasing each other. When he asks me some deeply felt question and we have a great conversation about it, I point out that he'd not have been allowed to ask that question in school.

Occasionally he's put on the spot because he doesn't really read yet. Once a friend invited him to church, and we both thought it would be a good experience. It turned out that they went to Sunday School and had to write essays. Of course, my son was completely embarrassed by the fact that the teacher had to write everything for him, even though he's theoretically in fourth grade. This comes up at other times, too. But because I have no serious doubts about the path we're on, I don't get stuck in this problem. After all, it's difficult for kids to deal with a*ny* ways in which they are different from the other kids. If it weren't homeschooling, it would be something else. My confidence helps my son through these rough times even though he really doesn't know how to handle other people's questions. For example, today he was concerned about going to a birthday party because he thought the adults might ask him what school he goes to. Once they heard he was homeschooled, he thought they'd then ask him to read some words to see if homeschooling works. Of course, that's unlikely, but it is possible. I made some suggestions: he could ignore them or ask them why they wanted to know, for example. But he pointed out that it's not especially realistic to expect a kid to stand up to an adult like that. I don't have any answers for him except to tell him that he'll run into things like this all his life, where he has to choose to stand up for his beliefs or figure out some way to avoid confrontation over them. He seemed satisfied with this and went off to the party and had no problem.

I believe that we make problems for ourselves when we think we can come up with answers for our kids that will make everything OK for them. If we look at our own selves, we can see that we have a lot to learn yet. I think that when we accept that about ourselves, we demonstrate to our kids that problems and difficulties don't mean there's anything wrong. They just mean we have more to learn. And when we let our children know that we trust them to come up with their own solutions, we teach them to trust their own inner voices. Heck, I've often found that my son's solutions are as good as or better than mine. And when we take the viewpoint that we're all learners and we can each learn from the other, the pressure is no longer on the parent to know and solve everything - and without the pressure, we seem to know more and come up with better solutions.

I hope Ken will keep seeking out other homeschoolers so he can get the support he needs. I started a support group in my area and have developed a terrific group of friends for myself and my son as a result. And the more Ken reads GWS, the more he'll feel kinship with those who write in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and the many others who subscribe. There's *lots* of us pulling for him!

Challenges & Concerns

If You Choose It, Believe in It

Julie Scandora (WA) writes:

It is unfortunately not uncommon for miserable people to prefer to have others join in their misery than to rejoice in the other's good fortune. I suspect the same is true with Sam's friends who are trying to convince him of the benefits of schooling. It is also their way of validating their experience about which they have no choice.

My children (ages 5, 8, 10) also have little contact with other homeschoolers. While a kindergartner across the street is now homeschooled, she seems to keep regular school hours. Other neighbor children go to a Catholic school, Christian school, private schools, and public schools. It's quite a mix, but the overwhelming reaction of all the school children to my own is friendly envy. Like all children forced to go to school, they would love to have the freedom mine do. Needless to say, mine have never been ashamed of being homeschooled.

Why the difference in reaction? I suspect the primary reason lies with the parents' feelings about homeschooling. When I began (fall 1991) I felt sure of my choice. I never saw it as an experiment. Sam's parents' waffling is surely picked up by their son. If the parents are unsure of their choice, how can the child feel differently? His family is his security. His parents are as much a part of his homeschooling as he is. If the parents do not provide the security of belief in the choice of homeschooling, then an unfair burden is placed on the child to prove that it works. (This is not the same as parents giving the child the choice between homeschool or other schooling. In such a case the parents support the child's choice. In Sam's case, neither choice is supported; the parents are unsure.)

My two oldest also had the "benefit" of attending school, so they know firsthand what they are missing. Possibly Sam and his parents could visit the neighborhood school. There they would see what an hour or a day in school really means. The parents would especially note that it certainly does not provide for much learning that is retained (which is why lessons are so repetitious). The parents may then feel less anxious about filling each day with wonderful experiences for their children. Instead, they could let the children create their own experiences. After all, what is wonderful to us may have no relevance to another, especially a child. And vice versa.

Finally, if parents want their child to have an experience as good as school, send the child to school. If, instead, they want something better, then consider homeschooling. Read about it, talk to others, observe, compare with the alternative. But if homeschooling is chosen, believe in it.

Worried About Tests

Pamila Daniel (TN) writes:

I need to know how homeschoolers with slow readers cope with school boards at test time. Last year, my oldest son scored above average in science and social studies, but below average in reading and math. I was commanded to give him a remedial course. I bought a phonics course - a cheap one that didn't help - and a math book. This seemed to satisfy the school officials.

This year my second son is slated to take the tests, and he is not ready. He has just started to recognize words on billboards, and he can read a few pages at a time, with my help, in his McGuffey Reader. I plan to write the school board a calm, intelligent letter, explaining why he can't take the tests this year. I noticed several school children skipped the tests last year, and I will ask that the same courtesy be extended to my child.

But what if they refuse? What recourse do I have? Sometimes I think I'd be willing to move anywhere, if such a place exists, where standardized tests were not required or revered. They do a disservice to every child who is forced to take them, homeschooled or not.

Family vs. Individual

Susan Zacharakis-Jutz (IL) writes:

One day this past fall I was in the midst of canning grape juice when David, our baby, woke up from his nap crying. I was just starting to fill the jars, so I called Frances (8) to come and take care of David until I finished what I was doing. She was furious with me for interrupting her in the middle of an art project she was working on. (She was the only person within calling range at the time or I might have asked someone else to help out.)

Then and there I vowed I would write to all of you at GWS and ask how other families deal with family responsibilities (i.e. the necessary work required to keep a family going and, in our case, a home business functioning). Just prior to that incident I had read Nancy Wallace's *Child's Work* and Agnes Leistico's *I Learn Better by Teaching Myself*. I have the impression from reading these books and from letters in GWS on self-motivated and child-led learning that these children spend hours and hours each day in the pursuit of their own interests, seemingly without interruption by family or the outside world.

Surely there must be parents out there who must, at times, interrupt their children in the middle of a project or activity out of necessity and/or because they believe, as we do, that it is important that children have responsibilities to the family that may or may not coincide with the path of learning that the children have chosen for themselves.

Our children have been involved from an early age in performing the day-to-day functions of keeping a household going. And, since our garden produce and the income derived from our home business (selling milk, eggs, and meat animals) are essential contributions if I'm going to continue to stay at home full time, we must all be involved in the work of these endeavors as well.

Frances (8), Reuben (6), and George (4) have daily chores indoors and outdoors that they have chosen to do. Generally they are quite cooperative about interrupting what they are doing to take care of the animals because they realize that it is important to the goats' health that they be fed and milked on a regular schedule. The indoor responsibilities, such as washing dishes, doing laundry, and housecleaning are not nearly as popular, and I find that at this point we are most successful at completing these without conflict if we all do them at a given time, such as right after breakfast, rather than each person choosing his or her own schedule. This may change as our children get older.

Although it's taken us some time to settle into a routine, the scheduled interruptions seem to be more readily accepted. What we're dealing with now are those unpredictable, unexpected, but necessary interruptions in their lives and mine that occur on an almost daily basis. Because much of our outdoor work is seasonal, in that it involves animals and the weather, I can't always predict accurately what will need to be done on any given day. At the beginning of each week, and again each morning, I attempt to give everyone an idea of what needs to be done and then ask who will help with what. But for the past six months our schedule has also been determined by David, who naps and nurses on his own schedule. Consequently, things are more unpredictable than usual and we have more incidents like the grape-juice-canning episode I mentioned at the beginning of this letter.

One comment about necessary interruptions: those interruptions are primarily defined by the lifestyle we've chosen. Living in the country and the work that involves is not a decision that we, the parents, imposed on our children. It is a choice we made as a family and one which we periodically evaluate with an openness to change.

I would like to hear from other families about how they handle family responsibilities. I would especially like to hear if other families find it necessary to interrupt one another in the midst of their work, what methods they use to do so, and how successful they are. Do people make a distinction between "child's work" and the larger arena of family work?

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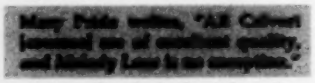

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Too Many Activities?

More from Susan Zacharakis-Jutz (IL):

Although my husband Jeffrey and I believe in the importance of people making choices about their own learning, we also believe that it is important to recognize the needs of other family members and consider those needs in the choices we make for ourselves.

This fall, Reuben (6) wanted to continue taking the Suzuki piano lessons he began over a year ago. It's a 35-minute drive one way to lessons, and the lesson fee and gas are a strain on our family budget. In addition, it's difficult and sometimes impossible for me to be an attentive and involved lesson participant and care for David (6 months old) simultaneously. As a family we brainstormed our various options and decided to take a break from piano lessons for now.

We make most of our decisions regarding outside commitments in much the same manner. That doesn't seem to fit with the philosophy of child-led learning and yet, with a family of six, it's not difficult to imagine a scenario where we would be spending most of our time on the road. I see other families whose lives revolve around one child's class schedule and others who are frantically driving and trying to meet everyone's needs. That's certainly not where I want to be at some point in the future. And, after reading Anne Brosnan's statement in GWS #88, "We act as if we want to have the same kind of social life as schooled kids..." and Susannah Sheffer's comment that this may be "an important point with implications beyond the question of socialization," I started to ask myself whether our children's requests for a certain class or activity were reflective of a genuine internal desire to learn something or a reflection of our society, which seems to be caught up in a lesson, class, meeting, activity craze.

I would like to hear from parents and children on this topic. Do families find themselves getting caught up in the lesson, field trip, meeting, activity rat race? Do they set limits? Who decides what the limits are? Do parents as well as children have limits? Who pays for activities? Are there financial limits? If it is disruptive to other family members, in that they have to drop what they are doing and ride along to a sibling's or parent's class or activity, how do they feel about the interruption? Is the activity OK if it interferes with family responsibilities? What if an intensive commitment prevents or interferes with a commitment to extended family (we're too busy to visit Aunt Lou who's ill) or too busy to be of assistance to our community at large?

Child Chose School

Susan Defosset of California writes:

I thought we would be a homeschooling family this year. The reason we are not turns on the issue of children's freedom of choice in matters of their own schooling, an issue I have not completely resolved.

When my son entered kindergarten last year, I knew nothing about homeschooling. If I had, I might have pulled him out of school right away. He cried every morning on the way to school. It was torture to see him march into the classroom those first days, lower lip trembling, sad eyes watching me 'til the last second. But it never occurred to me then that we had any choice.

Shortly after that I stumbled upon GWS in our local library. I was immediately captivated. I read every back issue, then read them all again. I read all the homeschooling books in the library, and all of John Holt's books. Then I read them all again. I was hooked! Here was a way of life that seemed irresistable, that fit in so well with my own love of learning.

Though I had my doubts about homeschooling an only child, and about my ability to find time for myself and my work (I am an editor and writer), I was nevertheless very enthusiastic about the idea. I began keeping what I called my homeschooling journal, in which I recorded my thoughts on homeschooling as well as my son's schooling experience, questions he asked, topics we explored together, places we went, and so on. I thought of it as practice for when we really started homeschooling in the fall.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the home school. While I was gearing up for it, my son was adjusting to, even enjoying, school. By June, when I made him stay home one day because of a cold, he cried - because he couldn't go to school! I had to laugh at the irony of it. Now that I was ready to homeschool, I couldn't drag my child away from the public school. During the summer, when I asked him what he thought about homeschooling (we had talked about it and had met some homeschoolers), he replied, "Oh, I'd rather go to school."

I was stumped. What should I do? Is it right to let children, especially quite young ones, choose whether to go to school? Or do I, the parent, know what is best for my child in this situation? I thought I did. I thought that my son who likes to be at home and is very attached to me, would prefer to remain here. I was wrong. So do I respect his preferences, or do I insist on mine?

I was mulling this over when I read Erika Thost's letter in GWS #86. She wrote, "I think it is only reasonable to counter this misinformation [about how wonderful school is] with an outlook from my point of view." The problem with that, in my case, is that my son already has his own point of view about school. The world that he views through his eyes is quite different from what I see through mine. Perhaps it is a beloved teacher greeting him in the morning, or a favorite friend saving him a place at circle time, or checking on the ant farm or the tadpole bowl or the silkworm tank. Who can presume to say what he sees? Or that his view of school is

less valid than mine? Perhaps I could communicate my opinions of school with force, and thus "persuade" my son to view school the way I do. But even if I could, should I?

Though I firmly believe that unschooling is the better way, I couldn't bring myself to force my son to homeschool. I felt I would be depriving him of something he truly enjoys. I know he likes being among so many children - so different from our quiet home and a neighborhood with no kids to play with. If I forced my point of view he would be sad and resentful.

So he is now in first grade and loves it. He comes home happy and energetic every day. And he is still a kind and considerate person, as yet uncorrupted by the school environment. Though I am not thrilled to be dealing with the school system for another year, all the homeschooling reading was not wasted. I know so much more about education, school, and how children learn than I did a year ago that I don't feel intimidated by the teachers anymore, but am confident and empowered. Knowing that my son doesn't need school in order to learn makes me feel more at ease about his schooling. I won't depend on his teacher to teach him. He will teach himself, with her help, and with my help, but mostly with his helping himself. And we both know that we always have the option, if he ever gets fed up with school, to school at home. And that, I suppose, is real freedom.

I still don't know if there is a right answer about very young children's freedom of choice in their schooling, but my son seems to have made the right choice for himself for now. I would be interested in hearing from other parents facing a similar dilemma.

Texts are Only a Resource

Melany Cueva (AK) writes:

Katie announced emphatically, "This book won't ever, ever teach me easy fractions!"

Our new Saxon math textbooks had arrived a month ago. Based upon everything positive I had read about this program, I viewed it as a valuable addition to our home school. Both my children progressed at their own self-determined pace through the lessons. This, I thought, placed them in command of their learning.

Katie's comment hit me broadside. What exactly had she meant? Then she said, "I already know fractions. I taught myself." This well-meaning textbook was robbing her of the joy of discovery. Her simple comment articulated the essence of learning - truly allowing people the pleasure and satisfaction of finding out on their own.

Saxon Math texts really are a great resource, but they are just that. They should be used like any other resource - say, the encyclopedia. For me it's often hard to give up my sacred cows and realize the less I interfere, the better off my children are.

Watching Children Learn

Reading at 10 and 11

Jutta Mason of Ontario wrote in a report to her local school superintendent:

... The biggest change in Daniel since my last report is that he has now almost mastered reading. Watching this process in the children, now for the third time, is a great privilege. In this family, reading is not really a subject for teaching, so its arrival is something like watching small children learn to crawl, then walk, then talk. Each time one of the children has learned one of these primary skills, I have been astonished at the flexibility and power of human beings. Now, with Daniel reading, I am mindful that this is the last time I'll have the privilege of watching such a process.

Daniel is the latest of the three children to read, being now almost 10. In the summer I thought he was getting it, and I encouraged him to read to me sometimes, but he resisted. So after a while I stopped asking him. At that time he was still rather forgetful, usually having to sound out the same word again even if it came up twice in one sentence. Then in the fall he began to read store signs and notices with a vengeance, so that a trip, even walking along the street, would be a continuous series of whispers by him as he read (to himself) any word that his eyes lit on. I had no idea how many words clutter our landscape. Then at night, in bed, sometimes past midnight, he read his way through a fat Spiderman annual [his older brother] Luke gave him for his birthday last year. At the same time he expanded into the sports pages of the *Globe*. He did all of this reading on his own, outside of my very occasionally asking him to read me a storybook. He was obviously getting better, but even so I was somewhat shocked when he and I went to the "Discovery Gallery" at the museum three weeks ago, and he read me things about "atmospheric conditions" and "helium gases in the stratosphere" without any prompting and almost without any need for correction. He read me long paragraphs of technical writing to instruct me in the ways of the stars and the weather. His main remaining problem, as far as I can see, is with punctuation - catching the commas and the periods. When he learns this, I guess our last bird will be fledged, in a certain way.

Irene Mott (NJ) writes:

Wickliffe learned to read at age 11 1/2, and now two years later reads at the ninth grade level. He does not write yet, but with our organic teaching and learning method he does not need to write as yet. When I finally learned to let go of the tutor, the sit-down lessons with phonics and slogging through books word for word, when I at last took all hands off his learning, he taught himself when he was ready. I, of course, needed the support of GWS, all the articles concerning late readers. Thank you, all who have written assuring me that eventually, sometime, he would read. Misty (15) and Wickliffe are now finishing the Private Pilot Ground School, which entailed heavy technical reading, and they loved it!

Writing Notes Together

Lindsey Muscato (CA) writes:

I am 8 years old. Me and my mom had this great idea: we write notes to each other. One reason to do it is so that we know what each other is thinking. Another reason is so that I can learn how to spell things. I feel closer to my mom now, because it's easier to write than to talk about some things; at least it's that way for me. I think this is a good idea for other kids of all ages.

Cathy Earle, Lindsey's mother, adds:

My kids write to pen-pals, write stories for our homeschool group's literary magazine, and write articles for the group's occasional newsletter. But they have never gotten into writing a journal. When I bought a flashy notebook and began to write notes to them, I noticed that it is easier to write about sensitive issues and feelings, because there is less pressure on the other person to respond. Even though I spend all day with my kids and we talk about many things, the writing of notes has encouraged much more and deeper sharing, and more closeness.

This is how it works: I write private letters to each girl in her own special notebook, and she can write back on the next page. Using a notebook instead of separate pieces of stationery keeps the correspondence together.

I find it easier to give heartfelt, genuine praise in the letters. For example, I wrote to one daughter, "I am proud of you. Everyone - kids your own age, adults, teens, and younger kids - all seem to like you." During everyday living, I say things like, "Love you!" and "I like the way you fixed your hair" and "I appreciated the way you watched over the baby this morning." But it takes thoughtful time to assess particular strengths, and that usually means writing about them.

Also, I feel less hesistant in writing to address such concerns as, "I am a little bit worried that you are trying to grow up too fast." Reading about my concerns and responding in writing seems less embarrassing to my easily embarrassed daughters than a face-to-face conversation.

From School to Homeschooling

Daniel Bergin (ME) writes:

If you've already been in school for a while and then you start homeschooling, at first it's pretty hard because your friends are still at school. But that gets better after a while because they can still come over after school and on Saturdays and Sundays. Also, even though my old friends are at school, I have new friends who aren't in school. I met them at our local homeschool support group gatherings, and also Mom found out about all the families homeschooling in the towns around us and got their phone numbers and called them up. Then we visited these families and I became friends with some of the kids.

Homeschooling can be kind of boring at first because you're so used to having teachers tell you what to do. But then it gets a lot better, believe me. It's like me writing this story. I'm having fun doing it. When you homeschool and you choose to do things, they can be fun.

In school it was really bad because the teachers were really mean. Since I've been out of school for almost five years now, I've forgotten about most of it except for the teachers making me put my head on the desk if I did something wrong. I remember my neck getting really sore. Also, some of the kids who go to school are really mean. I have a friend named Jared. Most of the kids think he's pretty weird, and one day he was just walking by this kid named Scott, and Scott grabbed Jared and spat in his face for no reason, and then grabbed his finger and twisted it around so he sprained it!

Another bad thing about school is homework. And then there's sports. When you play sports in the middle of such a busy schedule, they drain all your energy. I've watched my friends who are in school play varsity sports. I think sports are a trick that schools play on kids to make them get so exhausted that they can't complain, and also to give them a reason to come to school just when they start really hating school.

Homeschooling is great because you can do things that the kids in school can't. Like my brother went to Alaska for three months, and I can go to Mount Katahdin and camp there on weekdays. My learning doesn't take as much time at home, and it's more fun. Last summer I caught a lot of butterflies and then let them go, because I was really interested in butterflies then. One day we went to a museum at a college that was full of butterflies from the tropics. There were some very rare ones. Some of them were twelve inches across and seven inches long, and the colors were amazing.

I make a lot of money since I'm out of school because on weekdays I can get money snow shoveling while other kids are at school. I had another job, too, but I didn't get paid for it. It was an apprenticeship at a national fish hatchery. One day when I was 11 we were visiting the hatchery and looking around at the thousands of fish. I said I'd love to work there. My mom said she didn't know if they would let children volunteer. But we went right into the chief's office and found that they had a volunteer program already in place and had no problem with children volunteering as long as their parents signed a release form.

I volunteered there once or twice a week for about three hours. I got to feed fish and spawn huge salmon. One of my jobs was to go into a little pool where there were about twenty salmon and pick them up and put them into a net. For some reason it helped them get ready for spawning better because they flopped around more. It was so much fun trying to get them with a net. The rangers also let me hold these huge ten-pound salmon while we got the eggs out and fertilized and then sent them off to the hatchery. They liked having me there to help, because I liked doing some of the jobs that they thought were boring, like feeding the thousands of fish, and that freed them up to do other things.

Don't Force Independence

Gail Sichel (NJ) writes:

Sometimes I've been encouraged by well-meaning friends, who don't understand our child-rearing attitudes, to take more time for myself, doing things I want to do that exclude the kids. Aside from the fact that I don't really want to do anything other than what I'm doing - I use the conceptual framework of sequencing, i.e. you can do and have it all, but just not at the same time - I realized that first the kids need the experience of my interest and joy in being with them as they do what they want to do and what interests them. To say, "Good, you can do that, go do it while I do my thing," before they are ready to separate, is a form of abandonment. And anyway, when I try that it never works, because they still want or need my presence.

Now that Corianna is 7, I see this shifting. But she still needs me to be there as a presence when she can do something but doesn't like the task - writing thank you letters, cleaning her room. It's as if she still draws strength, power, and sustenance from me on a very subtle level that is easily overlooked and is sometimes an annoyance if I put the judgment, "You should be doing this on your own."

Amarynth, who just turned 3, still wants and needs me in sight as she does her work of playing with her little people. That is probably part of the same process, only an earlier phase. Education at home is a process of partnership. I never had this as I was growing up, and I can catch my tendency to think that once they've mastered a task I should send them on their own way towards increased individuation. I suspect individuation occurs naturally, when the person feels the need to pull away. Independence evolves; it can't be forced. So I've surrendered to this most amazing and magical process and enjoy my life more. I share my life with the children, and they share theirs. The less I push away, the more peaceful and loving our lives are, and then they just seem to wander off to their own interests naturally, and come back with more to share.

"Marbles Curriculum"

More from Gail Nagasako (HI):

... Our "curriculum" for the last six months has been marbles, because this is what Thumper (9) is totally into. He has thoroughly studied two books on marbles, practically memorizing them, and has searched at least 375 antique stores and booths in his quest to have a complete collection. Along the way he's learned how marbles are made (art, science, geology), when they were made, and some about other antiques (history, anthropology, archaeology), and in his buying, selling, and trading marbles and other items, he's acquired grade-level math skills without ever having had any formal math. Now we're starting a book - cataloging and photographing his collection, including listing values. He plans to include some articles that he's collected, including one cover story on marbles from the *Smithsonian* magazine. Did you know that marbles have been found in ancient Egyptian tombs? He also was hired at minimum wage by an antique store owner to sort the store's marbles by type and value because the man was impressed by Thumper's knowledge. Next Thumper will gather them into $5 bags and sell them for a commission. Now he's into digging in ancient dumpsites for marbles and antique bottles and has begun to show an interest in archaeology.

Learning about Prejudice and Tolerance

Andrea Quarracino of Pennsylvania writes:

Last summer my sister and I decided we'd like to go to an art camp. But our family ran into financial difficulties, and we couldn't spare the money. We had decided to spend the summer swimming, hanging around the house, etc., when a woman from the art studio called and asked if we were planning on taking any classes over the summer, because she needed someone to house and go to camp with two African-American kids from the inner city. Mom explained our financial problem, and the woman said if we were willing to house the two kids for a week, she would let us go to the camp on scholarship funds.

So it all worked out. I really enjoyed having Danyelle and Davida stay with us. We live in an all-white neighborhood, and I was really disappointed in some of our neighbors, who gave them funny looks and avoided them altogether. I learned a lot that summer, and I really enjoyed the art camp, too. The most important thing I learned is not to judge people by the color of their skin; it's what's inside that counts.

Still more on Video Games
and the dilemma of choice vs. regulation

Learning Self-Regulation

Jane Dwinell (VT) writes:

In the past few issues of GWS, parents have discussed how they limit their children's use of TV and video games. One mother relates how her child thanks her for the limitations, another how her child uses video games to escape boredom. Are we helping our children by regulating activities that we think aren't good for them? Shouldn't we be helping them learn how to regulate themselves? Isn't that one reason we homeschool - so that children can learn what they want, when they are ready - in other words, self-regulation?

I don't mean to suggest that I think parents should bow out completely. On the contrary, our job is to assist our children to learn about themselves and their world. To work toward that goal, in our household, there are few parent-imposed regulations. There are no mealtimes or bedtimes as such; each person listens to his or her own body for sleep and food. TV is not denied - and nobody watches it. Computer games are mainly played by the adults - both Sky and I play Tetris or Wordtris almost every evening for fifteen or twenty minutes. It's our way to wind down. The few rules we have in the family are simple - seat belts on in the car, teeth brushing every night, and clothes and shoes on when we go to town.

When we got our TV and VCR two years ago (Dana was nearly 4 and Sayer newborn), Dana wanted to watch her videos all day long. Because we have solar power and the TV pulls a great deal of energy, we did limit Dana to one video a day, and we explained why. (As we have never limited food, we did not want to limit the videos either but felt we had no choice because of the power requirement.) She never whined or begged for more, but periodically would ask if she could watch two one day and none the next, which we agreed to. After about a month she basically stopped watching videos and now watches two or three a month. I realized what had been happening during that month - she was busy memorizing the videos just as she memorized all her picture books by having us read them to her over and over and over again.

So why is it that parents think it is wonderful if a child reads the same book over and over or rides her bike around the block constantly for several hours or plays the piano all morning, but if the child plays Nintendo or watches TV for two hours it is bad? Repetition and memorization may be at play here. Developing a skill and feeling confident of it (with Nintendo or other games) may be what is drawing the child.

But just as forbidden candy bars and potato chips are more enticing because they are not allowed (or rarely allowed), could it be the same with parent-regulated Nintendo and TV? When children are allowed to move from parent-regulated foods to self-regulated foods it takes them about six weeks to gorge to their hearts' content and believe that they really have the choice before they slow down and listen to their bodies. Then the junk food intake stops in favor of more nutritious food - because their bodies ask for it. Could the same thing happen with Nintendo and TV? Overeating can be as hypnotizing and destructive as a lot of passive entertainment, but the forbidden is always more interesting.

When we first got Tetris and Wordtris, Sky and I played for hours. It frightened us and we considered setting limits on ourselves. But we knew well that foods that are forbidden or regulated are more enticing, and we decided to let it go, knowing that we would stop or slow down in due time. And sure enough we did. Had we set an external regulation instead of self-regulating we would probably want to play more than we do now. Are we going to wait until our kids are adults before we let them learn self-regulation? By then their bodies' own wonderful inner voices may be turned off - look at all the couch potatoes, compulsive overeaters, and TV addicts there are in our society. Sky and I as self-employed people are still learning self-regulation. After years of school and jobs where we performed on someone else's schedule, it has been a challenging struggle to learn how to budget our time and do our work. My hope for Dana and Sayer is that they will always know how to self-regulate and that they will have more energy and clarity to do whatever work calls them as adults.

As parents we need to encourage our children's innate inner voices. Sometimes our job may be to point out something significant about a child's behavior. For example, when Dana eats sweet things on an empty stomach she gets jumpy and obnoxious and we don't like to be around her. After we pointed out those facts to her, she is now usually careful to eat ice cream after she has eaten other food - but it is up to her. If one child plays Nintendo or watches TV because he is bored or angry or lonely, the parent needs to discuss it with the child and perhaps come up with another solution to the problem that triggered the TV or Nintendo in the first place.

Or maybe we should just let them play or watch. All of us, adults and children alike, sometimes overeat, watch excessive TV, read junky novels, take drugs, drink alcohol, or stare out the window when we should be washing the dishes, cleaning the house, or writing a report. Sometimes we need to take a break, period. Some people take walks or meditate or write or do healthier things as a way to take a break. Whatever way we choose, we all need those breaks and our kids need them too. We each need to listen to our inner rhythms and respond to them as best we can. And we need to have patience with ourselves and our kids. I know for myself that once or twice a month I go through a day when all I want to do is sit around and read mystery novels and play computer games. I don't like it, but I've learned that I have renewed energy if I allow myself that time off. Our kids may need that time off more often - they are learning so much so fast that their minds may need frequent breaks for rest and processing. Maybe that's when they watch TV and play Nintendo to "excess." As parents our job is to observe and try to understand our children's cycles (just as we observe and try to understand their learning styles) and then talk about it with them so that they can gain greater awareness and eventually become magnificent self-regulators.

Glad We Let Him Decide

Marion Cohen (PA) writes:

I want to add some thoughts to the discussion about TV and video games. In GWS #84 I wrote how, in the twenty-two years we've been parents, we were torn between the two stances described in the discussion of video games in GWS #87: worry about the quality of TV programs and the passivity of the act of watching TV, and the belief that kids could be trusted to make their own decisions, even with respect to TV. The second viewpoint won out, most of the time, and last year we felt rewarded when Bret, then 12, decided all on his own that he was tired of TV, Nintendo, and several piles of Nintendo games in his room. He sold them all, making comments to us like, "Now I'll have time to meet people" and "I want, at the end of my life, to have only a few very favorite things."

I'm really glad, now, that we handled things the way we did. There are several other ideas regarding this issue which sustained us through the years:

(1) For many children, especially children who are loaded down with too many activities, via school or other adult concoctions, the only way to relax and sit still is to watch TV. They have to have some excuse to just sit there and "do nothing"; they are not encouraged or supported when they *actually* do nothing.

Maybe this is the reason many children (and adults) like TV and video games so much, why they need these things. And perhaps children who are homeschooled, or are otherwise allowed to live relaxing, uncomplicated, *uninvaded* lives, don't need TV or video games as much.

(2) There are many reasons, besides the "right" ones, that so many adults don't like to see their children watching TV. One of these is appearances. Parents worry what people will think. Or they worry about the implications of the TV-watching, that perhaps the reason for it is that the children aren't well-adjusted, or loved enough, or stimulated enough. In other words, the parents worry that it might be their fault. Or that people might think it's their fault.

This is understandable and I'm not saying such worry is completely unjustified; what I'm saying is that parents need to keep this in mind; they need to ask themselves again and again whether or not it's truly for their children's sake that they discourage ar.d forbid things like TV and video games, or for appearance's sake. Then they need to base their decisions on this more accurate information.

(3) It seems to me that many of the reasons that adults (including homeschoolers) don't feel comfortable with TV are school-like. It's hard for me to explain exactly what I mean; I think I mean reflecting a conventional school mentality, not trusting children, being unwilling to let a year, or a day, go by without children learning something, making too big a deal about things involving children.

So many anti-TV statements seem to me school-like. The most obvious is, "TV interferes with homework." A more subtle variation is, "TV prevents you from using your mind" or "TV is a waste of time." Certainly, people don't need to be using their minds every instant of the day, or even most instants of the day, nor do they have to be making the most efficient use of all or most of their time. Great ideas incubate as we sleep, as we play, and perhaps also as we watch TV or play video games. And even if they don't incubate, that's OK too.

"TV is passive," "TV keeps you away from other experiences," "TV isn't creative," "TV interferes with family life" - in many cases, these seem to me to be variants pure and simple of "TV interferes with homework" or "TV isn't good for children."

I'm not saying that I've made up my mind about the TV/video games dilemma. I still worry that TV is intentional brainwashing. I'm just saying that those three points, those three hunches, have helped me in trusting my children and leaving them alone at times when I might not have, and so far I'm pleased with the results.

Kids Ask for Regulation

Karen Mende-Fridkis (NJ) writes:

I have read with fascination the letters on computers and video games, but while they interested me I did not think that I would be directly involved in a similar situation. However, times changed. Shortly before the birth of our third child my husband and I decided to bring the children's computer upstairs into their bedroom. It wasn't getting much use in the room next to my husband's office downstairs. As a matter of fact, the only time the children looked at the computer was when older boys came over and played some games on it. Then a group of children would sit around the screen watching, listening, and discussing the game. I was beginning to think that computers were a "boy" activity.

However, all that changed once the computer was within fingertip reach. All of a sudden the computer began to be turned on regularly. As soon as she woke up my daughter would flick on the screen and would play Gathering Treasures for over an hour. Her brother Jacob sat next to her and watched, mesmerized. Well, there I was with a newborn at my breast. I saw the computer as a convenient way for me to catch up on needed rest and as a handy babysitter for the older children. They were happy and quiet as can be. And it wasn't all bad. After all, wasn't my 3 year old learning the alphabet? Jacob could recognize the letters needed to reach his favorite games. He taught himself how to get around the computer in a couple of weeks. My husband kept telling me not to worry, that they were having fun and even learning some new skills. I agreed, but was beginning to feel the start of some other problems.

For starters, Kate hadn't touched her markers in over a month. Precomputer, she had drawn daily. Fights were breaking out between Kate and Jacob over computer issues. And as I watched them I could see all color drain from their faces as they sat and sat and sat. My children looked like zombies to me. I voiced my concerns and began to plan for some guidelines to be followed with regard to computer usage. I was willing to allow them to play, but with restrictions.

One morning about two months after we moved the computer upstairs, Kate, Jacob, and I sat down for a family meeting to discuss terms that would be agreeable to all. We settled on an hour a day for each of them, to commence after chores were completed. When we began to discuss the consequences for breaking this rule, I suggested no computer time the next day. For the second infraction, the computer would be moved upstairs into the spare room. Then Kate took me by surprise and suggested that we move the computer upstairs right now. "Do you really want to move the computer out of your room?" I asked incredulously. "Yeah, Mom," she answered. "I think I play too much. It really is a lot like TV, don't you think?" This from a girl who watches television only on a rare occasion (but has heard her parents attack it).

Once assured that this was what she wanted and that Jacob agreed, I didn't waste a minute. That morning we moved the entire set-up out of their room. Kate no longer wakes up and turns on the computer. She wakes up and begins to draw, or read, or play. There have been fewer disputes between her and Jacob. Coincidence? Perhaps. There have been other changes too. Our baby grows and I'm less tired. I have more energy to give the older children. And I see them returning to their old ways of interacting - pretending to be other people and spending the morning setting up a store or a boat or a pillow home. They still play on the computer, but only rarely and never with the same powerful allure.

For our family the close proximity of the computer was too much of an enticement for them to avoid. But now that it is out of sight, they seem to be able to choose whether they want to play or not. Before, when Kate had an unoccupied moment she would immediately turn on the computer and plug in a game. Now she sits and thinks and then decides what she wants to do. Moving the computer has brought about such a big difference around our home.

Less Interested Now

Jordan Hammond of Australia writes:

I am a 9-year-old boy who worked very hard to earn enough money to buy my own second-hand Nintendo last year. I sold things before Christmas, saved birthday money and allowances, etc. I have found that after I play video games for a while they get boring and then I don't use the Nintendo for a while.

I would like to see more games that have a person against the elements. How about an Alaska game where the dangers are things like having to watch for thin ice, avalanches, running out of food, getting too cold, keeping your dogs on the trail, etc.?

I have seen that some kids do take video games too seriously and go around kicking or hitting others, but they are the same kids who would do this after watching a violent TV series or show.

Because I spent a lot of time on computer games I am now pretty good at using the keyboard for other things, and I think that is good. But I don't think that people should play computer games all day long just to get used to the keyboard ,as there are some programs that are made to help you do that more efficiently.

My dad spends hours on a computer game and it really looks like a waste of time to me. I've found that I have no problem turning a game off now because I don't have as much interest in the games as I used to. I know I can always play if I want to but I find that there are often more interesting things to do.

The discussion of video games begins in GWS #87 and continues in #88 and #89.

JOHN HOLT'S BOOK AND MUSIC STORE

Books about Art, Music, Poetry

Art from Many Hands

by Jo Miles Schuman #1658 $17.95 + post.

This book reminded me of an experience my family and I had last summer: while camping in California's Sierra-Nevada mountains, we were treated to a basket-weaving demonstration given by a Native American artist who was also a great conversationalist. As her hands worked, coiling plant fibers with an expert's precision and patience, she talked with us about a wide range of topics - the joys and techniques of weaving, plant ecology, environmental safety, Native American-white politics, philosophy, religion - and somehow, she managed to relate all of this to her baskets. "The spirit of the weaver lives in each one of her baskets," she said. And in each coil, there was a story.

So it is with many traditional art forms: they tell the stories of the cultures from which they have sprung, while the art objects themselves sing with the spirits of their individual creators. *Art from Many Hands* is a book of multicultural art projects than can help children participate in this joyful process of creation while they learn about the traditions of a wide variety of ethnic groups.

At the beginning of each project, the author provides a short description of the featured culture and explains how the particular art form she is presenting fits in with that people's traditions. Then, through easy-to-understand, detailed instructions augmented by clear illustrations and photographs, she shows us the techniques we need to work within that art form using materials available in most communities. When the traditional art form calls for exotic materials, the author suggests alternatives, and when at all possible, she has kept the cost of the projects down by suggesting ways the young artist can use free or inexpensive materials found around the house or in the community.

The book is divided into different regions of the world, and within each region, several different ethnic groups are featured. Children can learn to make West African tie-dyed cloth, Burmese lacquerware, Puerto Rican seed necklaces, Navajo sand paintings, and Early American applehead dolls, to name just a few of the many projects described in this book. My 11-year-old daughter and I learned to make beaded bracelets using a loom in the tradition of North America's Woodland Indian tribes. We found the directions to be excellent (my daughter understood them with a few explanations from me), and within a couple of days we had created several lovely bracelets.

The author is a printmaker and an elementary school teacher, and inevitably her schoolroom experience creeps into her book. Classroom scenes are shown in photographs demonstrating technique, and suggestions are made for involving classes *en masse* in the projects. But I don't think this school influence detracts from the purpose of the book. Almost all the projects can be worked on at home, and those that might benefit from group participation would be ideal projects for the whole family or homeschool group.

As practical as it is, *Art from Many Hands* is also a book of uncommon beauty. A center section features color photographs of finished art pieces created by ethnic artists, and many black-and-white photographs, some of student art, are scattered throughout. The efforts of young artists might not produce objects as exquisite as those created by master artists, but as the author points out, those artists perfected their skills through many years of hard work.

The author discusses the problem of replicating art pieces, posing the question of whether or not reproduction is a worthwhile goal, and concludes that in most cases it is not. She has purposely chosen projects and presented them in ways that allow the young artist a great amount of creativity, so that each finished project can reflect the spirit of its creator.

In recent issues of GWS there has been discussion of how we homeschoolers can broaden our bases of multicultural understanding and inclusion. It seems to me that *Art from Many Hands* offers one way we can begin doing that. Learning to appreciate and respect the arts and crafts of many cultures is a way of celebrating the world's diversity, and this book helps children do so as they create beautiful objects of art with their own hands. — Mary-George Simonitch

Eight Hands Round: A Patchwork Alphabet

by Ann W. Paul #1666 $15 + post.

When my husband and I opened a children's bookstore five years ago, I had very strong feelings about alphabet books. I was convinced they were all gimmicky creations designed to drill children surreptitiously in academic skills at ever-younger ages. No way would we stock them on our shelves!

I wasn't long in the business, however, before I realized I was wrong. Alphabet books are an honorable tradition that have

been around much longer than the *Sesame Street* mindset of recent decades. The best of the genre are not teaching tools at all, but creative efforts to tell a story, share a concept, or simply compile a list, all within the confines of alphabetical order. I've come to appreciate a good alphabet book in the same way I admire carefully metered poetry.

Eight Hands Round is a fine example of a thematic alphabet book. Each page represents a different quilt pattern, accompanied by a brief explanation of the history or folklore represented by the pattern's name or design. The colors are bright and fresh, and the illustrations are well-suited to the folksy theme.

The nicest thing about this book is its appeal to so many ages. My 2 year old loves its visual impact. My 6 year old enjoys trying to figure out whether the designs really look like the names they've been given. ("Some do, and some don't," she concluded with a philosophical shrug.) Even older children might find the historical information of interest. Adults will surely admire the artfulness of the book's overall design. And obviously, quilters and quilt enthusiasts of all ages will love this book from beginning to end! — Sue Radosti

World Beat

by Peter Spencer #1718 $12.95 + post.

Music is our universal language, and no book we sell shows you why this is so better than *World Beat*. Written by a music critic and enthusiast, *World Beat* divides world music into nine regions: Southern Africa, Western Africa, Northern and Eastern Africa, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, the Caribbean Islands, North America, South America, India, and Australasia — with a chapter devoted to each. The book is not an ethnomusicological treatise, nor is it a thorough, encyclopaedic work; instead it is "designed with the first-time buyer in mind, someone who wants to get into world music but would like to know where to start, who is not absolutely made of money, and would like to be sure that each CD they are buying is something that will bear repeated listening."

World Beat is a pleasant, informative, and colorful way to discover the sources of the rhythms and sounds that are working their ways into Western music. For instance, recent albums by Paul Simon have had great success by incorporating the music of different cultures into American popular styles, but it is also now becoming commonplace to hear Latin rhythms, African talking drums, and other types of percussion on traditional Western music recordings from rock and roll to easy listening. Who is playing that instrument? What combinations of instruments make these sounds? What are their origins? *World Beat* guides you to answers to these and many other questions in an entertaining way.

It is impossible for any one book to address authoritatively the political and cultural backgrounds for each musical style, and one reader so far has noted that the author makes a few factual errors describing the Rastafarian culture of Jamaica. But it is not social insight that makes this book strong. It is the wide variety of artists and their music which are capably described in but two to ten paragraphs per entry, the generous selection of photo portraits and album covers that are reproduced, the discography and mail-order reference sections, and the sheer pleasure this writer takes in letting you know about these artists.

For instance, we read:

> MAHLATHINI AND THE MOHATELLA QUEENS
>
> The fifty-one-year-old Simon "Mahlathini" Nkabine (aka "the Lion of Soweto") is widely credited with having invented the mbaqanga style of South African dance-pop, first combining traditional Zulu melodies for voice and accordion with electric guitars and trap drums in 1965. With the three Mohatella Queens he has developed a balanced, varied sound, the women's vocal harmonies punctuated by his impossibly deep bass-falsetto roars, suggesting a hitherto unimaginable pairing of the Andrews Sisters and Howlin' Wolf...

In this entry, and in many others, we are provided many details and metaphors about what the songs sound like. Here Spencer describes the Eastern European recordings of Ivo Papasov and his Bulgarian Wedding Orchestra:

> ...Papasov is a clarinet virtuoso whose American and European audiences are often studded with jazz luminaries, jaws dropping at the sheer impossibility of it all. Papasov's frantic modern-jazz solos on clarinet ride over time schemes like 9/8 and 7/4, with equally hot solos from alto saxophone and accordion and then some James Brown-style funky guitar...

World Beat serves as a touchstone for many issues because it refers to so many different histories, cultures, and attitudes. It is also limited because it barely scratches the surface of any of these issues, but, again, this is not the main point of the book. Its main point is to suggest to you the exciting variety of music people create throughout the world, and here I think it succeeds extremely well. Learning about conjunto music from the south Texas/north Mexico border, Hawaiian "slack key" guitar recordings, French Canadian music, and Louisiana zydeco recordings, all in one chapter about North American music, is interesting enough. While igniting your curiosity, each record description is followed by a listing of the label and serial number, leaving you with few excuses not to hear something you think you would enjoy. The discography at the end of each chapter indicates which recordings the author highly recommends. The appendices provide mail-order addresses for all the compact discs mentioned in the book, as well as state-by-state listings of retail record stores that feature world music, and a bibliography. *World Beat* is a brief, lively, useful introduction to musical styles from around the world. — Pat Farenga

Operantics With Mozart

by Mary Neidorf #1702 $4.95 + post.

Both McAlpines were very impressed with the amount of opera-related information and activities packed into this delightful and inexpensive little book. For a child who is interested in opera, or about to experience his or her first opera, *Operantics* offers a wonderful introduction.

The book's focus is "mostly Mozart," but there's also a great deal of background information about opera in general. Included are explanations of the different operatic voices, clear illustrations of musical instruments showing their locations in the orchestra pit, a biography of Mozart, and illustrated synopses of four Mozart operas (*The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, Cosi Fan Tutte*, and *The Magic Flute*).

Among the activities are: a maze depicting young Mozart's Grand Tour of Europe, instructions for playing his "Minuet in G" (composed at age 5), a "hidden picture" in which orchestral instruments are concealed, a "musicrossword," and finger puppets for all the main characters in *The Magic Flute*. (*The Magic Flute*, by the way, is my all-time top choice for anyone's first opera, and its fairytale-like story makes it especially suitable for young children. I particularly recommend Ingmar Bergman's enchanting film version - sung in Swedish but with English subtitles - which is available on videotape and can be found in many libraries.)

Operantics' cover is designed to be removed and made into a stage, providing, along with finger puppets, all the basics for a home mini-production of *The Magic Flute*. Throughout the book, attractive line drawings seem to invite coloring in.

Although Nathaniel (14 and a long-time opera fan) pronounced this "a really neat book for little kids," I noticed he was charmed enough by it to read it from cover to cover. As I was, too. — Katherine McAlpine

Rise Up Singing Teaching Tapes: Bears and Bear Hugs

1710 $34.95 + post.

(Rise Up Singing Songbook #1280 $14.95 + post.**)**

Rise Up Singing, which we have carried in our catalog for some time, is a popular compilation of the lyrics, chords, and sources of over 1200 songs that are good for group singing. The songs cover a wide range of themes, such as traditional folk, Broadway show tunes, contemporary social action, popular music of the 19th and 20th centuries, and songs of many faith traditions.

The *Sing Out* magazine collective, who publish the songbook, have now produced four sets of audio cassettes that teach most of songs in the collection. This first volume, *Bears and Bear Hugs*, covers the sections that are most likely to appeal to children and families: "Friendship," "Funny Songs," "Home and Family," "Lullabies," "Play," and "Rounds." My 7-year-old daughter and I have sung many of the songs from the *Rise Up Singing* book together for years, and it has been hard for her that I didn't know the tunes to *all* the songs, so these tapes are just what we were waiting for.

Members of the collective, led by Annie Patterson, make the songs truly accessible by singing the first verse and the chorus, plus other parts of the song if the tune varies. So it is possible to sing the whole song with the help of these tapes, provided you

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have the book to give you the lyrics. Patterson's clear leading is easy to follow. We used these tapes at a party of five 7 and 8 year olds, and the tapes gave enough guidance that the kids were able to sing the songs they liked with only a little help from an unmusical adult.

We are not a musically educated or gifted family, but we do love to sing, especially with our children and their friends. The songbook has been useful and fun. The tapes helped us learn the songs we didn't know or weren't quite sure of, which has given us a great deal of pleasure.

As the set consists of six cassettes, in a good holder, it has to be quite expensive. But it teaches so much that I think it is an excellent value. — Maureen Carey

Rhyme's Reason

by John Hollander #1708 $7.95 + post.

When Holt Associates asked me to evaluate *Rhyme's Reason*, I didn't hesitate - and didn't even have to wait for a review copy. My own well-worn copy was close at hand, and my enthusiasm for the book is as strong as when I first discovered it nearly ten years ago. It was like being asked to introduce a cherished old friend.

Other reviewers of *Rhyme's Reason* have commented that it does for versification what Strunk and White's classic *Elements of Style* does for prose. The comparison is an appropriate one: both books are concise, highly informative, accessibly written, and immensely entertaining to read.

John Hollander, one of our foremost contemporary poets, has provided a comprehensive guide to all the "building blocks" of English poetry: metrics, patterns of rhyme, assonance, alliteration, stanzaic structures, and virtually every type of poetic form including Sapphics, six variations of sonnet, the villanelle, sestina, cinquain, pantoum, limerick, and blues lyric. Yet these are no dry, academic definitions. In each case, Hollander has brilliantly and wittily framed his explanations in appropriate verse. Here are some excerpts from his discussion of the quatrain:

> A quatrain has four lines
> As one can plainly see:
> One of its designs
> Comes rhymed abab.
>
> The ballad stanza's four short lines
> Are very often heard;
> The second and the fourth line rhyme
> But not the first and third.

And here, in just seven lines, he gives an example of rhyme royal, complete with a capsule history of the form and references to poets who used it:

> Rhyme royal is a stanza form of seven
> Pentameters, which Chaucer filled with scenes
> From Troilus and Criseyde and with heaven-
> Sent birdsong in the Parliament, its means
> More limited than are The Fairie Queene's.
> "Royal"? — from a poem by Scotland's first King James.
> (Some scholars differ: so it is with names.)

Although the book's primary focus is on formally structured verse, Hollander does not ignore the myriad ways in which free verse can create subtly different effects:

> Free verse is never totally "free":
> It can occur in many forms,
> All of them having in common one principle—
> Nothing is necessarily counted or measured
> (Remember biblical verse — see above).
> One form — this one — makes each line a grammatical unit. ...

The examples I've quoted here are relatively brief, in order to give a varied taste of what the book has to offer. Excerpts really can't do justice to Hollander's virtuoso treatments of such lengthy and complex forms as the ballade, sestina, and Greek choral ode; these, to be fully savored, must be read in their entirety. Whether or not the reader actually cares to experiment with writing Sapphics (or triolets or Spenserian sonnets or ottava rima), an understanding of how these forms work, and were used in the past, will certainly enhance anyone's appreciation of our poetic heritage.

Rhyme's Reason will be equally enjoyable to both the novice poet and the reader who is already quite familiar with English verse forms. As a manual and reference work it is invaluable, and yet its lighthearted, playful style makes it the sort of book one wants to read - and reread many times - for the sheer pleasure it provides. *Rhyme's Reason*, in companionship with *The Elements of Style*, is the most perfect gift I can think of for any budding young writer. — Katherine McAlpine

GWS Back Issues and Index

Back Issues: We strongly urge you to get the back issues of GWS, especially if you plan to begin homeschooling. Rates: $135 for a complete set. For any other combination of back issues, mailed at one time to one address, the cost is $2 each plus $2 per order.

Index to GWS #1-85: #1652, $5.95. Now in one volume!

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FOCUS: Publicizing Homeschooling

The following interviews are with young people who have spoken out publicly about homeschooling — on TV or radio, to newspaper reporters, or at conferences.

The World Would Be a Better Place

Interview with Mali Sastri (MA):

What kind of homeschooling publicity have you done?

I was on a small cable-TV talk show with another teenaged homeschooler.

Was the experience of answering questions on TV different from all the explaining that you have to do to friends and people you meet?

It was different because I was prepared. Beforehand, I thought of all the things I wanted to say, but then I found out that you don't get to say that much once you're on the show. So in a way, maybe you shouldn't prepare that much, or you should just prepare very simple answers. I had been thinking more about the philosophy of homeschooling, but the host asked very basic questions about what I did.

Could you get any sense of the host's attitude toward homeschooling?

He had gone through high school, so he had a typical attitude. You could tell he hadn't liked high school, but his attitude toward us was kind of like, "Why do you guys get to do this?" He didn't seem that interested in actually trying to find out about homeschooling. But I think the format of the show had something to do with that.

Were there any questions that surprised you?

He asked how I would learn calculus, and I haven't gotten to calculus at all yet, so all I could say was that I would get a textbook and learn it from that. I think that *is* probably what I would do - try to learn it from a book - but he had the idea that you have to have a teacher for everything. That gets back to the philosophy, again, that I had wanted to talk about.

Sometimes the questions a host asks assume things about homeschooling that might not be true.

One thing he asked was, "Don't you miss the chance to bounce ideas off of other kids?" We both said that actually there isn't much opportunity to do that *in* school. There's a lot of competition and so much insecurity, what with worrying about popularity and such, that creativity and self-expression are so often lost. In homeschooling, if you want to interact with other people and share ideas, you can always find ways to do that in a noncompetitive atmosphere. I've actually spent most of these past two years doing things on my own, by choice, and I think that's been very good for me, maybe one of the best things about homeschooling. It gave me a chance to get to know myself again, and to be creative and expressive. I feel like in school they don't encourage you to really *think* about anything. But now I'm coming out of that period of being alone and I'm more interested in doing things with other people.

When I saw the show, I remember being struck that the host asked you how you could tell how much you had learned or how well you were doing. He seemed very surprised that you didn't need someone else to tell you how well you had understood a book, for example.

Yeah, I said that in homeschooling, there's no rush, so if you read a book and don't think you understood it as well as you want to, you can read it again. Recently I was reading a science book that had review questions at the end of each chapter. When I did the questions, I realized that I hadn't really understood that chapter at all, so I went back and read it again, this time absorbing everything until it was clear in my mind and perfectly understood.

When you do publicity for homeschooling, do you feel a responsibility to represent homeschoolers, or to be a good example of a homeschooler?

Because everyone who does homeschooling does it differently, you know you can't be exactly an example of a typical homeschooler, but the host and the TV audience might not know that. You should definitely try to come across in a good way, good in your view and in the views of the audience, if that's possible.

Do you think it's worth doing TV shows like this, even when there are so many misunderstandings?

Yes, I do think it's worth it to try to tell other people about homeschooling. I've been doing a lot of reading about feminism lately, and I remember reading somewhere that it's important not to be so radical that you don't try to explain yourself to people. You can't just be off in your own world; you have to be involved in the politics, too, and in trying to have other people understand you. Many people know nothing of homeschooling, and doing publicity is a good way of at least letting them know there *is* such a thing. You never know - you could leave a lasting impression and be an influence on someone's future decisions. You could have an influence on the future of the world, because the world would be a better place if more people would learn outside of institutions.

You Should Spread Homeschooling Around

Interview with Liz David of California:

What type of homeschooling publicity have you done?

Television, radio, and newspaper. For the television show, they came to our house and taped us playing a math game, and then right after that we went to horseback-riding lessons and they went there with us. They asked me some questions, but didn't put that on the air. The newspaper reporters asked me questions that they did use.

Were they the same kinds of questions that you get asked by people you meet?

Yeah, they're mostly the same types of questions.

Can you tell what the reporters' attitude toward homeschooling is?

I think they're really appreciative; they think it's really neat. You can tell from the expressions on their faces, you can tell they're learning about it. Some of my friends go to public school, and *they* ask me harder questions about homeschooling than the reporters do. I just talked to a friend of mine who's 15, and she asked me questions like, "Don't you get lonely because you don't go to public school and don't have that many friends?"

That's funny, considering that she's one of your friends! After you do a show about homeschooling, do you ever think of things you wish you had said?

After I hear myself on the radio or see myself on TV, I often think I could've done better, like when I said, "I really like homeschooling," I should have said, "I really like homeschooling because you get to go at your own pace." I should have been more specific. But I've never done a live show; I've done the kind where they put you on tape and if you mess up you can go back and change it.

Do you do any preparing before shows like these?

My mom and I practice together. She asks me questions that she thinks the reporters are going to ask me, and I respond. Of course, I don't know if she's guessing the questions right or if they're going to be totally different, but it's amazing - most of the time she's right.

I think it's a good idea to practice before you do something like this, because then you get a feeling of what it's like and you're not *that* nervous.

Yes, I think some kids who have never done this before wonder if you get very nervous.

Well, there are some questions I can't answer, like the question, "Do you wish you could go back to school, sometimes?" I do wish that sometimes, but I also wish I *wouldn't* go back to school. I'm thinking about going to junior high next year, because I hear all this wonderful stuff about it, but I'm not sure - in some ways I want to go and in some ways I don't. So if a reporter asked me whether I wish I could go back to school, I would say, "I really can't answer that," because it's really complicated. Sometimes they're running out of time and they don't have time for long answers.

This brings up the issue of privacy, too. Some kids might not want to answer that question because they would feel it's too private. What about when those TV reporters came to your house? Did that feel like an invasion of privacy?

I don't think homeschooling has to be that private, because I think you should experience your learning with other people, and you should spread homeschooling around. I feel really lucky, because a lot of kids don't do this, and I have a special mom who does homeschooling. I know not everyone wants to homeschool - my friend, the one I was telling you about, feels that she doesn't want to [illegible] homeschooling because she really likes school. But I do think people should at least try homeschooling, because I think kids will like it if they try it. You get to learn a lot, and go at your own pace. In school, if you get something wrong, you feel humiliated but in homeschooling you don't feel that way, because you're just in front of your family. I've been to school, and sometimes reporters ask me to compare school and homeschooling. I say homeschooling is better for me because I get to go at my own pace.

How do the reporters treat you, an 11 year old? Do they seem to take you seriously?

I think they take it easy on me, and don't ask me very hard questions.

Do you ever hear from people who saw you on TV or in the newspaper?

Yes, especially from people who saw our family in the paper. I love to read the newspaper, and I think a lot of kids love to read it too, or to flip through it, so when we were in the *Sacramento Bee* a lot of kids told me that they saw me.

Do you think it's OK if some homeschooling kids don't want to do publicity stuff?

Yes, I think it's OK. If some kids don't feel comfortable doing it, they shouldn't have to do it.

Reaching Hundreds of People

Interview with Eric Thorner (NY):

What shows have you been on?

I was on "The Real Story," on CNBC, and on a show on Queens Public TV, a local show.

What kinds of questions did you get asked? Were they like the questions you get asked just in the ordinary course of things,

by people you meet?

They're sort of the same questions, but maybe sometimes on a higher level. For instance, when I was on Queens Public TV, it came up that I was interested in Ancient Roman History. That probably wouldn't have come up if it were a regular conversation.

What were the hosts' attitudes toward homeschooling?

We had known the host on the Queens Public TV show, so he was very nice, but the CNBC host seemed to have a chip on his shoulder about homeschooling. The questions he asked me were very small questions, almost as if he didn't think I could handle more complicated questions.

If you get asked a question that shows a misunderstanding of how you homeschool, how do you handle it? Suppose the host asks how it feels to get assignments from your mother, for example, and the truth is that you don't get assignments at all? Do you answer a question like that on your own terms, or on the host's terms?

I try to go in between, kind of. I try to think of what they want me to say but then sculpt the answer so it's as true as possible. If I got asked that question about getting assignments, I would say that most of the time I'm really not sitting there doing assignments. I visit a lot of museums and things like that, and I learn a lot of things outside my house. I think you learn a lot more in homeschooling than you do in school, and it's also a lot more fun. You don't get stuff shoved at you. Let's say you go to school one day and you feel like doing arithmetic, but the teacher has you doing spelling. In school you can't really do anything about that, but in homeschooling you could probably ask your mother or father if you could do arithmetic, since you're in that type of mood.

Do you think doing TV shows like this is worthwhile? I think people wonder about this a lot - is it worth trying to explain yourself, do you really get an opportunity to do that, etc.

There are a lot of people who have never heard of homeschooling, and if they turn on the TV and see something about homeschooling, maybe they become interested in it. Maybe if they don't have children they tell their friends about it, because TV reaches millions of people.

Since you feel it's important to let people know about homeschooling, do you ever feel a responsibility to be a good example of it? I would think that this might sometimes be a burden.

I do feel a responsibility, but it's not really that hard. I don't feel overwhelmed by it, and I don't mind answering questions over and over again. In fact, not that many people do ask me questions. My friends who go to school just say, "That's great!" when I tell them I homeschool, so it's not like I'm so tired of answering questions. But even if lots of people asked me questions in my daily life, I would still go on TV if I was asked to, because it's worthwhile to reach hundreds or even thousands of people.

Some people worry that reporters or talk show hosts will misinterpret what they're saying about homeschooling.

Sometimes that happens, but I think you have to try your best and see what happens. I haven't had it happen to me, that my words get misinterpreted, but I've heard of it happening to other people, and I think that's one of the worst things that the media does. You have to try to stick to what you want to say, and be careful about how it could be misinterpreted. Let's say there was a kid on a show who was homeschooled but had gone to school before. If they asked him, "Do you miss school?" and he said, "Well, I kind of miss my friends a little," they could edit it so it said, "I miss my friends," and that would turn it around and make it seem more emphatic than he meant it to be. So you have to be careful. If you feel trapped, just try to move yourself out of the trap as smoothly as possible. You can do what the president does! If the president is asked a question that he feels uncomfortable with or can't answer, he'll try to move to another subject. I haven't actually had to do this, but people have told me about doing it, and I've observed it, too, so I think I could do it if I had to.

This makes me wonder if you did any practicing before you went on TV the first time.

Yes, I think you have to do that. It's good to do role-playing so you're ready for different questions. The commentator had asked my mother beforehand, "What are some questions I can ask you?", so she would write those down and the commentator would also tell her some questions he planned to ask. So first I pretended to be the commentator; I asked those questions and she answered them. Then we switched and I had a chance to practice answering the questions, and to say things again when I didn't like the way I had said them the first time. Doing this made me more self-confident about going on the show.

I know some people worry about leaving the wrong impression, or an incomplete picture, because often you have so little time on shows like this.

There's always another time! Especially around September, the media goes crazy with homeschooling, so if you want to, you'll probably get another chance. Sometimes after a show I've thought of other things I wish I had said, but then I tell myself, "Just save that for next time." Everything can be like one big practice. You really don't have to be nervous. I had a very good experience with the first show I was on, so that gave me the confidence to go on the next show, but I think even if it doesn't work out that way, even if the first show doesn't go well, you can always remember that one time, it *will* work out.

We were talking a minute ago about how you think it's worthwhile to do publicity activities. Would you go so far as to say that homeschoolers have an obligation to do things like this?

I don't think you really have an obligation. I think it's a really good thing to do, but not something that *has* to be done.

Telling About Alternatives

Interview with Amanda Bergson-Shilcock (PA):

I know you've done a lot of different publicity activities, so maybe you can just tell about some of the major ones.

I've done radio and TV shows, and talked to lots of newspaper reporters. I've also done workshops at homeschooling conferences, La Leche League conferences, and some other places like the Rotary Club. It's funny - I got started at this when I was 8 and the third grade teacher at the local school asked if I would come in and talk to the kids about how I didn't go to school. I discovered that I liked doing this kind of thing. Doing workshops is different from talking to reporters because you have more control over it and you can get into the really unusual and interesting aspects of homeschooling. You can go beyond the traditional questions.

Have you had TV reporters come to your house?

One interesting time was about a year ago, when I was 15. Special Reports TV, which runs in doctors' waiting rooms and other places around the country, was looking for a homeschooling family to interview. Each segment they do is about three or four minutes long, so we didn't think it would be any big deal. But before they even came here they spoke to us on the phone for about two and a half hours, and then called us back the next day and talked for five hours! Then they set up a day to come with a camera crew. They ended up staying in our area for two and a half days, filming us playing violin concerts, and me working at my job at the library, and all sorts of other things. Part of it was a more formal interview.

I think my family's trying to do two things when we do publicity: erase the stereotype associated with people who don't go to school, and tell people that alternatives are there.

One really funny thing happened after the producer went back to California. While he was here it seemed like he really understood that homeschooling was different with different families, and that our family really didn't do school at home. But after it was over he called us twice, saying that his co-workers didn't believe that we did only about two hours of schoolwork a week! He kept calling so we could tell them that he wasn't making this up.

Can you tell what people's attitudes toward homeschooling are by the questions they ask?

Yes, and you can also tell how interested they are and how much space they've been allotted. We just talked to a newspaper reporter, and he was very nice but he wasn't interested in in-depth answers. He just wanted the quick, stock answer, which was kind of disappointing to me because I feel that the stock answers have been printed over and over by now.

Do you try to say what you want to say, anyway?

Mom and Dad have taught me strategies for interviews. One is, don't let them trap you into a pat answer that won't be what you meant to say. The other is to think out some points beforehand that you really want to make, and try to make them no matter what questions they ask you. You have to do that, although you don't want to be pushy or rude about it. But if they ask you, "How has homeschooling worked for you?" you can say, "It's worked really well, and one of my favorite parts is being able to get out in the real world," and tell all about that. You don't have to wait for them to ask you, "Do you get out in the real world?"

Our family spoke at a local school board meeting recently, because our superintendent asked us to, and even though they weren't sleeping or making fun of us, they didn't seem very interested and they didn't ask many questions. I was disappointed that people who claim to be so interested in education in our community either viewed homeschooling as a slap in the face or thought of us as religious fanatics or hippies.

Since you get asked so many questions about homeschooling just in the course of a day, some people might wonder why you like to answer those same questions again for the media.

Sometimes I like interviews better than someone on the street asking me questions, because the interviewer is usually more careful to be polite. Sure, there are plenty of days when I feel like I've answered the same group of questions twelve times, and if I could've sat those people down together and answered the questions one time, it would have been easier. But talking to the media sometimes feels like a way to do that.

We're talking about all the frustrating parts of publicity, but you do so much of it, and you even initiate some of it yourself by doing workshops, so there must be something you actually like about it.

I like workshops especially because, as I said, I have a chance to get into the more in-depth stuff. I'm not pretending that I like answering the same familiar questions over and over. Sometimes when I get asked questions by someone I meet I'll take the easy way out and say I go to a private school. But most of the time I view answering questions as a way to educate the public about homeschooling, which I do want to do.

So do you feel some kind of obligation to answer these questions and talk to reporters when you're asked to?

Yes, in a way I think I do. A friend of mine is deaf, and when I talk to her, sometimes we talk about mundane things, sometimes we talk about serious things, and sometimes we talk about her being deaf. I don't want to ignore it, because it's something I want to know about, and I'm sure that she's answered many of my questions a thousand times before, but I respect the fact that she's willing to answer them again for me. So when someone asks me questions about homeschooling, I try to believe that this person genuinely wants to know. I also think that if you give people enough information, maybe they'll start to realize what a mess our country's education system is in! And I want to make it easier for when I'm older and homeschooling my own kids - maybe if I answer questions now, there will be fewer people asking my kids questions.

Since you feel this way, do you feel a burden to represent homeschoolers or at least be a good example of homeschooling?

I do feel that sometimes, and it's probably not good that I feel it, but I try not to think about it too much of the time. But it's also like when I go into a store, I feel like I'm being representative of teenagers. Today I got followed around suspiciously by three sales clerks in one store, and I felt so insulted, even though I knew that they were just trying to do their job and that other teenagers have gone before me and maybe given a bad impression. I think to myself, if enough homeschoolers acted badly, the response to homeschoolers would be like what the response to teenagers is now, and so I do feel it's my responsibility to represent homeschoolers well - but I certainly don't mean it's my *sole*

responsibility. Of course I'm not the only one who can do it, it's just that in many situations I'm the only one around. And in a way this is always a burden minorities have - my friend who's deaf is trying to get into medical school, and because they had a bad experience with one deaf medical student, they're seriously considering denying her admission. They told her that it's not because she's not qualified, but simply because it didn't work with the other student.

So being a homeschooler puts you more in the public eye than you would otherwise be and makes you think more about how you come across.

It definitely puts you under more scrutiny. I know I get asked questions that people wouldn't dream of asking kids who go to school.

This brings up the question of privacy that goes along with this. Isn't it very invasive to have a TV crew observing you for three days?

It's definitely invasive, and we did try to put our best foot forward - not to give them an unrealistic picture of our lives, but trying to show them the best side of our lives. It did mean a loss of privacy for that time, and of course parts of it were artificial. There's a scene in the video tape where we're eating dinner, and my 8-year-old brother brings in an invention of his and I say, "Wow, that's really neat!" I really did say that, but the TV guy said, "Could you say that again?" and I had to say it a few more times, while trying to eat my dinner!

But even with all that, it was worth doing this?

I think it's *worse* to do a quick interview. Often those are national and a lot of people will see them, but it's *more* likely that wrong impressions will come across when you have such a short time and, often, a host trying to lead you in a particular way. So even though doing an interview like the Special Reports one took more effort, I think it was worth it, and it's not like we have people knocking on our door every day asking for that kind of thing.

Do you sense that it could get out of hand, that after a certain point there'd be more publicity than you could handle?

Well, although I would hate that in a way, I would also like it because it would mean that homeschooling was getting noticed. I really don't think it's anything to worry about - that there would be so many people wanting to interview our one particular family. I just don't foresee that happening. And I also trust that we'd be able to decide what was too much for us.

You know, since you do so much publicity, some people might wonder if you're pushed into it by your parents, if they're trying to show you off or something like that.

I think it's almost always been the interviewer's idea to have a child on - it wasn't my parents saying, "Oh, boy, we'll put Amanda up there!" With the workshops I do, it certainly wasn't because I was pushed into it. I kept doing it because I liked it. I like sharing my life with people. I could have said no any time, and in fact my sisters don't usually like to do these things and our parents don't push them at all.

I think my family's trying to do two things when we do publicity: erase the stereotype associated with people who don't go to school, and tell people that alternatives are there. If you keep saying there's only one thing to drink, eventually people will believe you, but if someone finds another drink, people should know about it. Maybe not everyone will like the flavor of that drink, but they should know about it so that they can say yes or no to it.

Interview with David Guterson

David Guterson's book *Family Matters: Why Homeschooling Makes Sense* (#1676, $22.95 + post.) has been flying off our shelves since we added it to our catalog this fall. Guterson is a high school English teacher who homeschools his three children, and his book looks at the worlds of school and homeschooling, the history of schooling, the question of homeschooling in a democractic society, and much more.

You say in your book that people call you a "walking contradiction" for being a schoolteacher and homeschooling your own kids, but that you don't consider it a contradiction.

It doesn't feel like a contradiction to me because I'm simply somebody who cares about education, whether it's in the home or in the school or anywhere in the world. A lot of kids come to school to get an education, and I'm glad to have the opportunity to be there to help them. As a parent I felt a strong responsibility to make the best decision I could for our children, and for us that meant homeschooling. In the meantime, though, ninety-eight percent of the children in this country are coming to schools, and they need teachers who care about them.

Teaching in school also gives me the opportunity to work from the inside for educational reform.

Are you able to do that - to bring your perspective to the school and maybe change things?

This year I'm the chair of our site-based council. Our council is charged with the duty to make important decisions pertinent to the school. So that's helped me to bring my perspective to the school and try to influence the course it takes.

I was intrigued when you mentioned briefly in the book that you've discussed homeschooling with the kids in your classes. What do they think of it?

In almost every class I have, it comes up very early in the semester. They're aware that I homeschool my kids and they're very curious about it. There are kids who say, "That's a great idea and I'd love to do it," and there are kids who say, "This is the most foolhardy, absurd thing I've ever heard about." I think the discussion usually influences what they think about the subject, since so many of them haven't thought about it at all before. But I try to be fair and not abuse my position. I'm not trying to get them to share my opinions.

What happens with the kids who say they would love to try it, or kids you see are not liking school? Most teachers don't know that kids like that have options, but since you do know it, do you tell them so?

Well, it is a tricky situation for a teacher. I try not to give the kind of advice that says, "Here's the right path for you." I try to say, "You have a lot of options, and here are some that are available to you besides the conventional classroom" - because we have alternative programs in our district. And I try to call their attention, on an equal basis, to homeschooling. If they seem very interested in homeschooling, I generally recommend they take a look at *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* and think

about the ideas in it. I try to present it as one option among many, but I have gotten flak on at least one occasion from a parent who said, "Hey, don't encourage my child to homeschool."

You discuss the issue of parental involvement in education in so many ways throughout the book. One reason this issue seems to be problematic is that schools claim that they would love for parents to be involved but say the problem is that parents are apathetic, while parents say they want to be involved but the schools won't let them be.

I think both are true. It's very difficult for schools to get parents involved, in part because of what schools are - big, unwieldy institutions that don't lend themselves to parental involvement. But on the other hand, a lot of parents really aren't interested. I had a conversation with a parent the other day about a child's writing. At one point I suggested that perhaps he could help his son in a specific way, and he laughed and said, "That's not my role; you're the teacher." A lot of parents bring that perspective to it.

Yet you advocate parental involvement so strongly, so what about a parent like that? Could his perspective change?

I hold out hope that we can have a change of consciousness in this country about education. I can't say I know exactly how to bring it about, but the more the good word gets out about homeschooling, and the more people see what homeschoolers do, the more other parents might begin to think about the connection between parenting and education.

Sometimes people in schools who are doing very interesting, innovative things will say that it's the parents who want all the traditional emphasis on grades, uniformity, and so on. I often think, though, that the parents are only demanding these things because they've been taught to demand them - they've been led by the schools to believe that these things are important.

Parents tend to be suspicious of change. The way it is now feels safe to them; if their kids play the game, they can get A's and go to college, and since that's what these parents want from the schools, they don't want to take the risk of changing things. And the parents who benefit from the status quo are precisely the ones who tend to get involved in the school; that's *why* they get involved, to safeguard it. It's extremely disheartening.

You speak somewhat favorably, in your book, about government programs that are designed to help parents teach their kids - not help them homeschool as we would think of it, but help them work with their kids after school or during the pre-school years. I can imagine many GWS readers not liking the idea of the government going in and telling people how to do things, or making them feel they have to be told how to help their kids.

There *is* something bothersome to me about a lot of government intervention, and I certainly wouldn't want to see it in the lives of people who don't want it, but I would hope that government *support* would be there for people who do want and need it. Unfortunately, we've gotten to a point in our society where there's been such a breakdown in the *natural* institutions of community that government somehow has to step in and address some very difficult problems.

You said just what I was thinking, that we now have programs for things that people used to just naturally help each other do. Is there some kind of middle ground for people who are not yet ready to give up on the idea of community life, who want to take some steps toward rebuilding it?

I hold out hope that we can have a change of consciousness in this country about education.

I think the best thing would be government programs designed to help communities become functional in that regard, where the long-range goal would be for the government to pull out and let the community work. One program that I mention in my book that I think is good is called HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters). It's designed to go into neighborhoods and find people who are, so to speak, educationally functional, and to let them become the root from which everything else flourishes. They go into the homes of their neighbors and try to help them, so it's not the government going in, it's the neighbors. I think that's a good approach - to try to identify what's working in a community and build from there.

In the HIPPY program, can people refuse the help?

Oh yes, it's voluntary. It's basically designed for single mothers on welfare with very young children. What happens is that a neighbor essentially knocks on the door and says, "There's a lot you can do to help your child." Ultimately it has the effect of helping the child *and* of helping the mother to take an interest in her *own* education. Then perhaps she becomes the sort of neighbor who goes to another neighbor, and it multiplies, naturally and informally.

It's interesting because, as you know, there are single parents on welfare who are homeschooling their children successfully, and I think they often resent the idea that "single parent" is automatically seen as a handicap.

I don't think we should deny that there *are* some things that are harder about raising children on your own, but yes, it's bad to make generalizations about different kinds of families and say, "This kind automatically doesn't work."

What about the relationship between schools and homeschoolers? What kinds of programs or arrangements seem good to you, and what kinds are bad?

Last year I did quite a bit of research into this because I was trying to start a program in my own district that would bring some cooperation. We ultimately got a program, and I think it's a good one because it's strictly voluntary. It offers homeschoolers field trips, workshops, mini courses, and access to mentors and resources, and they don't have to do anything except show up. They don't have to fill out forms, or take standardized tests, or in any way try to prove something to the school district. They don't feel as if they're being monitored, and the school district is able to do its constitutionally mandated job of seeing to the education of all the children, whether they attend conventional classrooms or not.

The bad programs are the ones that make all kinds of demands on homeschoolers, insisting they demonstate they're on a par with school kids.

Isn't that tricky, though? You said, "Their mandate to see to the education of...", but wouldn't many schools interpret that to mean exactly, "make sure that they are on a par with schools"?

Yes, it took a little while here to get school leaders to see that every child learns differently, and that the duty of the schools is to honor that and to offer a wide range of educational opportunities. I see people in schools coming to understand this and to acknowledge that our current system of putting children in classrooms doesn't address the reality that every child learns differently.

Some homeschoolers are still wary of working too closely with schools, though, feeling that their fundamental differences in approach will make this too difficult.

Well, I would caution homeschoolers not to make adjustments that don't feel right, not to go along with something they don't feel comfortable with. Often schools do attach strings to things - they're not always reasonable and accommodating. But in our state, schools have to offer to homeschoolers, on an equal basis, the same services they offer to school kids. They've agreed to that here in part because the funding works: if homeschoolers come in to the school library, they sign a little statement saying how much time they've spent there, and that translates into

money for the district.

I want to go back for a moment to the question of why people think homeschooling isn't feasible under many different circumstances. In your book you do such a good job of addressing the whole issue of adults' working lives and how people shouldn't be forced to choose between work and being with their children.

People have to make a living, but so many are frustrated by how hard they have to work and how little they get - financially and emotionally - in return. On the other hand, a lot of people love their work, and I think that's very human - everybody is looking for *real* work. Everyone is asking, "Who am I? What is my meaningful work?" and those are essential questions. I think children should see their parents, and adults generally, in that pursuit - searching for, and doing, meaningful work.

Yes, I was just thinking that, that sometimes we can go too far in the other direction and surround children with adults whose only apparent work is taking care of children.

That's something we focus on here at home. We want our children to see us leading meaningful lives, dealing with things that really matter to us, and not *only* taking care of them. Still, raising children is very meaningful work, and our culture doesn't always acknowledge that. People tend to think of it as "not working" or "just staying home." It's so much more than that.

Women tend to spend a lot of time thinking about these issues of children and work, and whether one should have to choose. I found it interesting that you say that fathers, too, suffer from thinking they have to choose.

I think both men and women should think about their relationship to their work and to their children. In men, the feeling of wanting to devote more time to their families is sometimes repressed - men have been so estranged from their families for so long by the forces of the Industrial Revolution that I think they often deny their need to be involved in their children's lives. So they take longer to grasp that this is part of their unhappiness, but I think when they do, when they start recognizing it and doing something about it, it leads to good outcomes both for children and fathers.

We've been talking about whether parents are able to be very involved in their children's lives in the logistical sense, but what about other challenges to that idea, like the fear that parents aren't qualified to teach their children, or that parents will pass on bigoted views?

About the perception that some parents are unskilled - it's always flabbergasted me that people think there has to be some level of educational sophistication on the part of the parent, or that there are professional secrets people learn in schools of education that are necessary for teaching one's own children. In fact, parents have been teaching and raising their children successfully for centuries. Now, of course there may be technical subjects that particular parents don't know, but the point is you're trying to create an atmosphere in which a child can get everything he needs. You're not trying to do everything yourself.

About the issue of brainwashing, or children not being able to get access to a variety of ideas because their parents are keeping them so close to home, I have to say I do worry about that, and I'm sure there is a certain segment of the homeschooling population that does do that. But you know, I worry about that far less than I worry about the uniformity of values kids get in school. We force feed kids all the values our culture is saying are correct at a given time.

And in school we also teach kids an ideology about how people learn and about what they themselves are capable of.

As a teacher, my heart just breaks over how many kids are seniors in high school and still doing papers for only one reason: because they want to get an A so they can go to college and get a good job. I feel bad that they've been so manipulated by a system that has taught them to see education in that way. They've learned exactly what the system has set out to teach them!

You mention in your book that although critics of homeschooling might find this paradoxical, homeschooled kids are usually very good at moving out into the wider world, leaving home to do interesting things and so on.

I'm always so happy to see homeschoolers in adolescence because they are generally so confident and full of life and energy and enthusiasm for whatever they love. It seems to me that this comes precisely out of the reasons their parents homeschooled them in the first place - so they could be independent learners, free from institutions, and so they could have strong nurturing in their childhood years. Because of that nurturing they're able to go forward, to grow up. Kids who *haven't* gotten that cling much longer, and their parents find it much harder to let go, too.

You say that homeschooling could potentially lead to a commitment to community service. It's interesting to think of homeschooling leading to exactly the thing that people often think it's a retreat from.

I guess I'm hoping for the kind of homeschooling life that takes kids out into their communities, where that's an integral part of how they're being homeschooled. If that's happening, I think a natural corollary is that children will develop a sensitivity to the community and a sensibility about their role in it that will ultimately lead them to want to take part in it, to serve it in one way or another. What I see in the public school kids I teach is that the institution walls them off from their community and alienates them from it. They know they're viewed as pests and nuisances, so rather than wanting to serve the community they end up wanting to strike back at it and act in destructive ways.

I was interested to see you mention that if the classics are truly more important to us than pop culture, we'll have to manifest that in our own lives - in other words, that it's incumbent upon everyone to keep these things alive. Parents often want their kids to learn things that they themselves are not engaged with, and they'll excuse that by saying that the young years are the time for learning these things, that they as adults don't have time, etc. But in a way, if this stuff is so important, it should be obvious to kids that it is; otherwise they rightly suspect that it isn't really important after all.

Yes, I don't think that we can demand of kids an interest in something that we ourselves have no interest in. So parents do have an obligation to figure out which aspects of the culture are meaningful to them and then engage with those things themselves, which is the best way to pass the culture on to kids.

At the beginning it was the common people who were engaged with Shakespeare. It was only later that we turned it into something you have to go to school for.

If kids see adults caring about Shakespeare, it will live, and if they don't, it will wither and die.

Of course, kids aren't only copycats. Quite often kids are into things that their parents don't care about at all, and vice versa.

They do see that their parents have certain basic attitudes toward things, though, and that rubs off on them. They may see that their parents think books are worth opening, but they'll know they don't have to open the same books. They'll copy their parents' habit of reading, but eventually read what interests *them*.

I have to say, though, that parents should watch out that they're not reading Shakespeare or whatever it may be because they've understood you to be saying that it would be good for their child, so they should do it even if they dislike it.

If you don't like Shakespeare, don't read him. Read something you do want to read. It should be a pleasure, not something you suffer through. And if kids have access to other adults, they'll have a chance to know others who enjoy other things.

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Is Homeschooling Opposed to Community Life?

[SS:] Some GWS readers may have seen or heard about the textbook, *Homeschooling: Political, Historical, and Pedagogical Perspectives* (Ablex Publishing, 1991). It's a book that intends to present homeschooling to the academic community, and has chapters on academic development of homeschoolers, parents' reasons for choosing homeschooling, the law, etc. One chapter is a critique of John Holt's work, and in a review I wrote of the book I devoted a lot of space to the issues raised by this critique. It occurred to me that it could be useful for GWS readers to see what I've written - maybe you've read the chapter or know people in the academic community who have, or maybe you find yourselves having to speak to the question of whether homeschooling is opposed to community life, even if you haven't read this particular critique. The following is an excerpt from a longer review:

... Most of the reports in Van Galen and Pitman's book are favorable to homeschooling. Susan Douglas Franzosa's chapter, "The Best and Wisest Parent: A Critique of John Holt's Philosophy of Education," however, is critical of homeschooling and specifically of the work of John Holt, the educational critic who was one of homeschooling's earliest and best-known advocates. Franzosa criticizes what she terms "Holt's individualist philosophy" and objects to home-schooling because it favors "non-participation" and self-sufficiency over social responsibilty and group action. This is a significant criticism. It seems likely that Franzosa speaks for others who, as she does, see homeschooling politically as a withdrawal from community life and educationally as an approach that favors learning in isolation over participation in group activities. Discussion of homeschooling ought to include discussion of these issues, but Franzosa's references to Holt's work and to the practice of homeschooling he advocated are so distorted and misrepresentative that they make it difficult to consider the issues in a productive way. This essay mars an otherwise informative, though not groundbreaking, collection.

Holt's individualist philosophy does not mean, as Franzosa suggests, either that learning must be solitary or that families should withdraw from community or political life and care only about their own needs. About the first charge, Franzosa says:

> Foundational to his description of the ideal classroom was the implication that social association was not necessary and may even be harmful to human development and learning. Collective activity, group interaction, and a sense of community were not featured in his early models for the classroom. Learning was seen as an autonomous activity, and the goal of education, self-actualization, was mistakenly understood as a product of personal independence from the influence of others. (pp. 124-125)

But Holt's early work was not about models for the ideal classroom; *How Children Fail* was the record of a teacher's efforts to understand what was going on in a particular, far from perfect classroom, and to explore the children's thinking and learn to recognize their coping strategies. The schools and classrooms that Holt later *did* consider valuable models — most notably The First Street School of George Dennison's book *The Lives of Children* and the Danish Ny Lilleskole described in Holt's *Instead of Education* — were precisely characterized by collective activity and group interaction. Furthermore, the very books that Franzosa cites to make her claim (particularly *How Children Fail* and *What Do I Do Monday?*) do indeed show children working together in Holt's classroom and learning from each other. Later (in *Instead of Education*), Holt wrote, "People often work very effectively in a group. Not all people, not always, and not for all kinds of work. Some people are loners and some work, like writing, is usually best done alone. But much of the time people can do far more working with others than they could all by themselves. They give each other a sort of collective feedback. ... This is one of the reasons why almost all the intellectual doings of people, like Math or Physics or History, or whatever, are done collectively..." Holt refers here to an epi-sode in *How Children Learn* in which first graders worked together on arithmetic problems and in the process made important discoveries about how numbers work.

> **Withdrawing from school can *also* be a way of entering the wider world, seeing the entire community as potentially educative, and giving children a chance for greater participation in the world around them.**

Elsewhere [*Instead of Education, Teach Your Own*], Holt writes extensively about the need for communities to have places where people can get together for various activi-tes. He devotes pages to describing effective spaces that already exist and offering proposals for new ones. Clearly Holt is not advocating autonomy or self-sufficiency *in the way that Franzosa suggests.*

Is there no truth, then, to Franzosa's description of Holt's philosophy as individualist? The description *is* apt, not because Holt opposed group activity but because he emphasized individual *ways* of learning, maintaining that no two children explore the world in the same way and that schools' effort "to force on all children a uniform curriculum, timetable, and methods of learning is a disastrous error." [from Holt's introduction to Nancy Wallace's *Better Than School.*] By this Holt did not mean that children could not explore the world together, collaborating or learning from each other while doing it. What Holt was opposing was the idea that a teacher could give the same lesson to thirty children and expect all the children to assimilate it in the same way. He was calling for respect for the individual learner's right to make choices about what will be learned, and when, and how, and *this* focus on autonomy and individual rights is what Franzosa has confused with an opposition to collaboration or group interaction. This is a misreading of Holt.

The characterization of Holt as an individualist also applies politically, but not, I would again argue, in the way that Franzosa suggests. He argued [in *Teach Your Own*] that "important and lasting social change always comes slowly, and only when people change their lives, not just their political beliefs" and [in *A Life Worth Living*] that "If the world is to be saved, it will only be when very large

numbers o people think, 'How I live, in my personal life, can make a difference,' and begin to act accordingly." He was an individualist in that he believed individual action counted for something. But he did not see this belief as apolitical; he argued in a letter written in 1978, "I am not on some 'individualist' side as opposed to 'community development' side," and went on to say that if he disagreed with some political activists or educational radicals, it was *not* about "whether community development or political actions are important, but about what *kinds* of community development or political action are likely to produce useful and lasting results." It is misleading and inaccurate to dismiss Holt as opposed to political action or indifferent to community life because his interpretations of or suggestions for such matters were atypical. Further reading of Holt's work, in which he discusses, for example, deschooling and the poor (*Freedom and Beyond*) and the economics of poor communities (*A Life Worth Living*) should make his stand on these issues clearer.

In speaking of Holt's advocacy of homeschooling, Franzosa describes him as "urging non-participation." Later she says he has "given up hope on any positive utilization of the community." It appears that Franzosa equates participation with participation in schools and the community with the school community only. There are several things to say about this. Quite a lot of homeschooling parents do, in fact, participate in public schools by volunteering in classrooms or as leaders of extra-curricular activities and by serving on school boards or attending parent meetings. Some homeschooling parents even teach in public schools. So withdrawing one's child from school does not necessarily mean withdrawing from the life of the school entirely.

Even when homeschooling does mean a decision not to participate in schools in any way, it is important to understand that not participating in a given activity or institution can be a form of political action, a way of making a statement. History has a long tradition of this, as seen in draft resistance and conscientious objection, refusal to pay taxes that support the military, product boycotts for political reasons, and so on. To assume that non-participation, in and of itself, is synonymous with irresponsibility, inaction, or lack of thought, trivializes and misunderstands what is for many a significant, purposeful decision.

Second, Franzosa's assumption that failure to participate in school, specifically, equals failure to participate in community life, in general, is faulty. If anything, people who educate their children outside of school talk *more* about strengthening community resources than do people whose children are in school, because homeschoolers rely so heavily on those resources. A homeschooling mother from Toronto, describing the "indoor park," a common space for families that she and others in her neighborhood created, writes, "Families who don't send their children to school have a much greater interest and stake in building community life, and therefore we are potentially an important resource to our faltering neighborhoods." [Jutta Mason, GWS #68.] Another mother describes how she and her children helped create a neighborhood newsletter, a soup kitchen, and weekend work parties in their urban California neighborhood [Elizabeth Hamill, GWS #75.]. Reports of homeschoolers volunteering at local workplaces are common, too. A 14-year-old Hawaiian homeschooler, describing her work at a local rest home, for which she received an award, comments, "Since I homeschool I have the flexibility [to volunteer] and I'm able to give of myself, and that in turn was honored by the community." [Angel Bosco, GWS #83.]

Many students who learn outside of school report that dealing with the legal issues surrounding homeschooling was their introduction to political activism. They describe lobbying their legislators, writing letters, following homeschooling bills through the legislative process, and their enthusiasm about the democratic process directly contradicts the claim that they are being raised to believe in non-participation.

The act of taking one's children out of school does not, in itself, suggest any one attitude toward community life, political responsibility, or the value of group association. To be sure, people can and do withdraw from school as a way of withdrawing from certain kinds of community involvement or as a way of protecting their children from what they consider to be harmful influences. But withdrawing from school can *also* be a way of entering the wider world, seeing the entire community as potentially educative, and giving children a chance for greater participation in the world around them. Simply knowing that a given family has turned to homeschooling does not tell us which set of attitudes they have or how those attitudes manifest themselves.

Resources & Recommendations

Free Learning Guide

Learning Matters is a new TV program that is airing on PBS stations throughout the country. They are offering a free booklet called *A Guide to Learning* that includes phone numbers and suggestions about learning resources, and brief articles about reading aloud, libraries, museums, community service, and homeschooling (Pat Farenga wrote this one). The booklet is available from South Carolina Educational Television, 1-800-277-0829.

Wants Used Instruments

Sam Hood, 140 Bond St, Westminster MD 21157, writes:

I am a 14 year old who is trying to learn musical instrument repair. I've always been interested in music, and some day I'd like to own a store that sells musical instruments and repairs them.

To become skilled, I must have instruments to work on. I do not have any instruments to fix up, so I cannot build up any talent in the repair business. If you have any old guitars, mandolins, flutes, horns, fiddles, etc., that you do not use and are just taking up space, would you consider donating them to me?

I don't want to receive dozens of instruments at once, so please don't send me any instruments yet; send complete descriptions of your instruments (including a brand name, if any) first. The instruments do not have to be broken. If I can use them, I will let you know and I will probably pay for shipping. This would really help me to become skilled at instrument repair, so I will appreciate your help.

Apprentice at Farm Sanctuary

Linda Holzbauer (NY) writes:

I have an address for apprenticeships: The Farm Sanctuary is the only refuge for abused farm animals in the world. The animals have been rescued from dumpsters, stockyards, and roadsides where they had fallen from trucks. The Sanctuary is involved in lobbying for legislation also. Factory farms do not doctor sick animals; they let them die slowly without food or water. The pending legislation would require humane euthanasia for these animals.

The full-time residents of the Sanctuary are all vegans and wear no animal products; apprentices follow the same rules. The Sanctuary raises organic feed and vegetables as well. This is an unusual place for young people interested in alternative farming or animals, particularly care of sick animals. Write: The Farm Sanctuary, PO Box 150, Watkins Glen NY 14891.

Magazines Looking for Kids' Work

Historical Network

Lluvia Crockett, 1820 County Rd 616, Walsenburg CO 81089, writes:

I'm a 15-year-old homeschooled girl. I'm trying to start a network of homeschoolers to write articles for a newsletter called *The Homeschoolers' Historical Network*. If you are interested and are over 10 years of age please write an article about any person or event in history that interests you and send it to me by March

30, 1993. The cost of the newsletter will be $10 per year and it will come out six times a year on recycled paper. You can pay now or when you get your first issue.

Baseball Card Newsletter

Josh White, 10201 Adams Rd, Galena OH 43021, writes:

I am 16 years old. I've always had an intense interest in writing and art, and have been very interested in the popular hobby of sports card collecting. For a while, I had been wanting to begin publishing some sort of periodical, but I couldn't think of what it could be about. Then I finally put my talents and interests together to begin a sports card publication from scratch. The idea struck me as both exciting and adventurous, for I had never known any-body who publishes nor had I any experience with or knowledge of publishing. I knew from the start that this venture would be extremely educational.

My two brothers and I started out on the making of *Total Baseball Cards Monthly*. We are now on our seventh issue, and we have picked up two other staff members (one from Indiana, and another from Chicago) and have improved the design. The issues are usually 18-22 pages long, full of art by homeschoolers, graphics, and stuffed with helpful articles, player profiles, and investment tips, and aimed at the 12-18+ age range. A year's subscription costs $18 and a half-year's subscription costs $9. A sample issue is $1.50. Send a check with your name, age, address, and phone number.

In addition to more subscribers, we need more writers and artists. We also especially need photography for our covers. I need someone who has ready access to a major league ballpark to take pictures of various players. Of course, I wouldn't be able to pay any more than the expenses of the film and a free copy of the issue that the photo appears in, but if you'd like the experience and the exposure, write for more information. I'm also interested in finding someone who could find a way to do interviews at a major league ball park. Again, the most I could pay would be a free subscription.

Fiction and Poetry

From Meghann O'Day, 255 Caney Creek Rd, Conway AR 72032:

I am starting two young writers' magazines. The first one is called *Platypus Egg*, and it is fiction and poetry for younger kids. The other one is called *On the Write Track*, and it will be fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and opinion pieces. Each magazine will be totally supplied by its own readers. If you would like to be part of this, write to me. Please, no stories yet! I need to have a list of people who are interested before I can start to read stories.

Magazine for Girls

We received information about a magazine that is just starting up called *New Moon: The Magazine for Girls and Their Dreams* (424 Lakeview Av, Duluth MN 55812; 218-728-5507). They are looking for many kinds of material from girls aged 8-14 — reviews, jokes, opinion pieces about discrimination girls face, news and current events stories. Send for their information and writers' guidelines to find out more. A sample issue costs $5. This excerpt from the magazine's introductory literature gives an idea of its goals: "With its editorial board of girls ages 8-14 and girl contributors from all over the world, *New Moon* provides a workplace where girls and women create a magazine which celebrates girls, explores the potential and magic of the passage from girl to woman, and encourages resilience and healthy resistance to the social and cultural inequities girls experience because of their gender."

Looking to Interview Homeschooled Adolescent Girls

I'm exploring the possibility of studying the thoughts and attitudes of homeschooled adolescent girls (say, ages 11 to 16). I would love to hear from homeschooled girls who would be willing to be interviewed (in person, over the phone, and/or in writing, depending on what works best). The interviews would be fairly lengthy and would be completely confidential. If you're interested, drop me a note with your name, address, phone number, age, and how long you've homeschooled. Thanks very much! — Susannah Sheffer

Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since the complete 1993 Directory was published in GWS #90. Our Directory is *not* a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses, that person is in the Directory. We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are not in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out.

AL — John & Cyndy LEWIS (Janice/77, David/79, Daniel/81, Mark/89) 1561 Said Rd, Semmes 36575

CA, North (zips 94000 & up) — Marc & Jenny BRINITZER (Cameron/87, Rachel/91) 9824 Oak Place West, Folsom 95630 **(H)** ••• Lani & Ted LANGLOIS (Marisa/78) 961 Valencia St, San Francisco 94110-2320 ••• Roy & Judy SHIMP (Alyeska/87, Taureanna/89) 2164 E Bellevue Rd, Merced 95340 **(H)** ••• Pam & Phil STEARNS (Anna/70, Jospeh/79) 7162 Via Colina, San Jose 95139

CA, South (zips to 94000) — Beverly & Steve BEAN (Daniel/89) 39 Calera Canyon Rd, Salinas 93908 **(H)** ••• Claude & Claudia DIAMOND (Rebecca/86) 539 Telegraph Canyon Rd Ste 145, Chula Vista 91910 ••• Eric & Te ri GRAHAM (Alexandra/88, Ryan/90) 82416 Gable Dr, Indio 92201 ••• Rick & LeAnn HARPER (Kristin/84, Shelly/86) 231-A S. Irena Av, Rendondo Beach 90277 ••• Peter & Anne SALAZAR-DUNBAR (Ben/87, Alex/91) SAN DIEGO HOME EDUCATORS, 1052 Lincoln Av, San Diego 92103 **(H)**

CO — George & Denise NEWMAN (David/87, Elyse/90) 12447 W 16 Pl, Lakewood 80215

CT — Alan & Joyce SCHAEFFER (Ben/88, Sarah/90) 32 Herrick Rd, Brooklyn 06234 **(H)**

DE — Edward & Julie ALLEYNE (Thema/83, Tsering/85, Amaranth/89) 6 Ridgewood Cir, Wilmington 19809 **(H)** ••• Jeannie & Al MORRIS (Lindsay/82, Mike/86) 113 Beachfield Dr, Rehoboth Beach 19971

FL — Mike & Amy GRIGGS (Mike/77, Jake/83) 355 S Highland Av, Green Cove Springs 32043 ••• Sparks & Linda RAMEY (April/75, Mark/79) 7180

ENTRY FORM FOR DIRECTORY

Use this form to send us a new entry or a substantial address change to be run in the next available issue of GWS.

Adults (first *and* last names):

Organization (only if address is same as family):

Children (names/birthyears):

Full address (Street, City, State, Zip):

Are you willing to host traveling GWS readers who make advance arrangements in writing? Yes ___ No ___

Are you in the 1993 Directory (GWS #90) Yes ___ No ___
Or in the additions in this issue? Yes ___ No ___

Cane Leaf Dr, Fairburn 30213

IL — Michael & Patti MILLS (Elijah/88, Erica/89) 8205 WonderView Dr, Wonder Lake 60097 •••• Danny & Audre RATHBURN (Leon/78, Andrew/81, Charlotte/85) 277 Lessenden Pl, Elgin 60120-7705 •••• Richard & Leona URBANEK (Jason/78, Jonathan/80, Roxanne/84, Stephanie/88, Gaylene & Valerie/92) 91 Quarry Rd, Kirkland 60146 **(H)** •••• Susan & Jeff ZACHARAKIS-JUTZ (Frances/84, Reuben/86, George/88, David/92) 13554 Flagg Rd, Rochelle 61068 **(H)**

LA — Clayton & Angela DECOTEAU (Dean/81, Lela/85, Meagan/89) 45198 Fontenot Rd, St Amant 70774 **(H)** •••• Lynn & Bill VINCENT (Dylan & Julia/84) 18690 Magnolia Estates, Prairieville 70769-3204 **(H)**

ME — Barbara & Rick PROSE (Sophia/88, Celeste/91) PO Box 120, Hilton Rd, Denmark 04022 (change) **(H)** •••• Claudette & Jonathan BEIT-AHARON (Nathan/83, Noah/87, Miriam/91) 705 Westford St, Lowell 01851 •••• Martin MILLER (Martin/92) 119 Wentworth Av, Lowell 01852 •••• Lindsey & Kevin MOLLOY (David/80) 286 Hill Rd, Groton 01450

MI — David & Keiko CARLSON (Emily/89) 1400 Park Rd, Jackson 49203 (change) •••• Martin & Debra COHN (Rosalie/84, Olivia/86, Forrest/88, Montana/91) 6036 Seven Mile Rd, S Lyon 48178 •••• Geoff & Almuth KOBY (Sarah/84, Peter/88, Elizabeth/91) 1106 McIntyre Dr, Ann Arbor 48105 (change) **(H)** •••• Maurita LYDA (Mauricia & Maunkia/80, Andrew/83, April/87) 17311 Bradford, Detroit 48205

MN — Peter FLECK & Mary WEBER (Hallie/79) 2108 24 Av S, Minneapolis 55406 **(H)** •••• Gary & Julie JEDYNAK (Alexander/84, Joseph/88, Maija/90) 10556 104th Av N, Maple Grove 55369

NJ — Christine AUSTIN (Kamau/87) 11 Martin Pl, Irvington 07111 **(H)** •••• Jeffrey & Miriam ORTIZ-GROB (William/86, David/90) 30 Lavina Ct, New Providence

NM — Mac & De SANCHEZ (Maggie/85, Morgan/89) PO Box 1882, Tijeras 87059 **(H)**

NY — Terence BURKE & June McINTOSH (86, 89, 89) 109 Grenfell Rd, Dewitt 13214 (change) •••• Clara MULLIGAN & Peter WATSON (Holly/88, Forrest/90) 5325 Barber Rd, Avon 14414 **(H)** •••• Marie & Patrick NIES (Andrew/80, Amanda/84, Zachary/87) Hamilton Manor, Bldg 136C, Apt 4C, Poly Pl, Brooklyn 11209 (change) •••• Stuart SEALFON & Celia GELERTNER (Rebecca/83, Rachel/86, Adam/91) 34 Sidney Pl, Brooklyn 11201

NC — Tom & Barbara HOWE (Brevet/79, Kira/83, Devon/86) 5094 Lucy Averette Rd, Oxford 27565 **(H)** •••• Michael & Tammy JONES (Aaron/84, Jaimie/86) 4068 Pinecrest Dr, Hickory 28601 **(H)** •••• Susan LASWELL (Sean/74, Sarah/77, Amy/80) 1000 Smith Level Rd #S-7, Carrboro 27510 (change)

OH — Bob & Valerie HOLWAY (Elisa/71, Ryan/73, Laura/82, Eric/84, Katie/91) 2695 Little Darby Rd, London 43140 **(H)**

OR — David & Karlyne LANDRUM (Melyssa/78, Laryssa/81) 1304 3 St, Baker City 97814 •••• Mandy & Jonathan SMITH (Emily/88) 2333 SW Indian Mary Ct, Troutdale 97060

PA — Steve & Melissa JOHNSTON (Travis/83, Chauncey/86) 2822 Winner Rd, Sharpsville 16150

RI — Beth & Mac RICHARDSON (Zachary/89, Andre/91) 500 Carolina Back Rd, Charlestown 02813

TN — Frank & Carolyn HATCHER (Chris/77, Kimberly/80) 1048 Oak Pinnacle Rd, Joelton 37080

TX — Greg & Casee ANDERSON (James/82, Brian/85) 1235 Baltimore, El Paso 79902 •••• Bob & Kate FULLILOVE (Gabe/80, Jesse/83, Gracelyn/87, Sam/90) 1610 Wilshire Blvd, Austin 78722 •••• Rose Ann & Jose GUTIERREZ (Richard/79, David/82, Mark/85) 7658 Barton, El Paso 79915 **(H)** •••• Stacey MERKT & John BLATZ (Daniel/87, Toby/90) 1002 Schley #1, San Antonio 78210 **(H)** •••• Ross STIRLING & Patricia KELLY (Benjamin/86) PO Box 1108, Crystal Beach 77650 **(H)**

VA — Joan & Tom CICHON (Kali/85, Maya/87) Blue Ridge Area Network for Congenial Home-schoolers, Rt 3 Box 602, Afton 22920

WA — Monica & Steve KRAUSE (Julian/87, Natasha/89) 16995 Rocky Glen Rd, Perris 92570 •••• Susan McMINN-SEEFELDT & Steve SEEFELDT (Robin/85, Holly/87, Heather/89) SE 405 Hill, Pullman 99163

WV — Kim & Mike JACKS (Michael/83, Jonathan/86, Kevin/91) 655 North St, Morgantown 26505 •••• Laura PALOSKI (Aaron/87) 1113 Welch Rd SW, Roanoke 24015

WI — Rene & Steve EMONS (Juline/83, Clayton/85, Caelin/87) RR 1 Box 328-2, Wautoma 54982 **(H)** •••• Pam OLSON & Bob WALSH (Katie/85, Hannah/87) Rt 1 Box 83, Stockholm 54769 **(H)** •••• Fran & Dick SWIFT (Henry/85) 3039 S 27 St, La Crosse 54601

Canada —

Alta — Lynn JENSEN (Tammy-Lynn/75, Ross/76, Patti-Ann/78, Jackie-Sue/80, Cathy-Lou/82, Remmington/84) 212 Deerview Ct SE, Calgary T2J 6J9 •••• Robert & Evonne SMULDERS (Amy/81, Jessie/83) General Delivery, Black Diamond T0L 0H0 **(H)**

BC — Courtenay & Adrian CATO (Taja/89, baby/93) RR 7 Hillbank, Duncan V9L 4W4

ONT — Robin & Debby MOORE (Ryan/81, Emily/83, Danny/86, Orrie/89) RR 3 Harley, Ontario N0E 1E0 **(H)** •••• MaryLynn & Phil SAUNDERS (Joey/80, Angela/83, Brian/85, Timmy/88, Jeremy/91) RR 2, Otterville N0J 1R0 **(H)**

QUE — Susanna ROSENBAUM & Ron DEWAR (Daniel/86, Zachary/87, Noah/89, Sym/92) 5578 Waverly St, Montreal H2T 2Y1 **(H)**

Other Locations — Michael & Karen ZIMMERMAN (Katy/87, Darin/90) PSC 37 Box 1271, APO AE 09459 (United Kingdom)

Add to Directory of Organizations:

Helpful School — EUREKA! Learning Community, Inc., 6 Ridgewood Cir, Wilmington DE 19809; 302-762-7420

Michigan — Heritage Home Educators, 2122 Houser Rd, Holly 48442

Ontario — Rideau Valley Home Educators Assoc, c/o Dubuc, 1144 Byron Av, Ottawa K2B 6T4 613-729-0117

Address Change:

Montreal — Quebec Homeschooling Advisory, CP 1278, 1002 Rosemarie, Val David J0T 2N0

Delete:

NJ — Hunterdon Home Education News, RD 1 Box 352, Frenchtown 08825

Complete Lists of Resources

Once a year we print our complete lists of helpful teachers, lawyers, professors, psychologists, school districts, and resource people. As with our Directory of Families, we print additions and changes to these lists throughout the year, so please continue to send them in. If you're sending us a change of address for a subscription, please let us know if you're on one of these lists so we can change it here, too. We're always interested to know whether people appreciate having this information available, so do let us know whether these lists are being used.

Certified Teachers

AZ - Kathleen M. KNEZ, Western Navajo Reservation, PO Box 889, Tuba City 86045; Special Ed

CA, South (zips to 94000) - Tutu ANDERSON, 6949 Fisk Av, San Diego 92122; 619-453-1086 •••• Karen BISHOP, N County Pl, 2204 El Camino Real, Suite 312, Oceanside 92054 •••• John BOSTON, PO Box 92, Escondido 92033; 619-749-1522 •••• Michelle BUSH, 2374 Stonyvale Rd, Tujunga 91042; 818-352-0315 •••• Sandy DOERFEL, PO Box 301331, Escondido 92030 •••• Herb HAMMETT, PO Box 45918, Los Angeles 90045; 213-281-6025 •••• Sarah LESLIE, 1846 N Edgemont #6, Los Angeles 90027; 213-662-5571

CA, North (zips 94000 & up) - Margaret ARIGHI, 6015 Mauritania Av, Oakland 94605; 415-653-5098 •••• Ruth BOTHNE, 17355 Melody Ln, Los Gatos 95030; 408-353-3620 •••• Karen CANTO, 21023 Lynn Ln, Sonora 95370 •••• Marilyn DeVORE, 4273 Forbestown Rd, Oroville 95966 •••• Carol CRESTETTO, 29 Taft Ct, Novato 94947 •••• Jasmin GERER, 414 Emeline Av, Santa Cruz 95060; 408-423-8311 •••• Roy SHIMP, 2164 E Bellevue Rd, Merced 95340 •••• Cheryl STEVENS, 2486 Pebble Beach Loop, Lafayette 94549 (K-12 special ed) •••• Scott YOUNG, Charlotte's Web, 1207-F Bridgeway, Sausalito CA 94965; 415-332-2244

CO - Kara BERTHOLF, #1 Rd 6565 NBU4, Kirtland 87417 (certified in CO & NM) •••• Sandra GUENTHER, 2923 Sunset Dr, Golden 80401; English, Spanish, French

CT - Geoffrey SMITH, 365 Bellevue Rd, New Haven 06511; 203-787-5659; Eng, math, 7-12, admin

FL - Charlotte THIEN, 12201 Old Kings Rd, Jacksonville 32219; 904-768-0472 •••• Roger TRUNK, Rt 1 Box 110, Satsuma 32189; 904-649-4479

HI - Debbie KUKAHIKO, FAMILY ACADEMY, 72-3960 Hawaii Belt Rd, Kailua-Kona 96740

IL - Suzanne BALDWIN, 1452 Andover Dr, Aurora 60504; 708-851-0538 (K-12 music)

IA - Richard & Sharon CARGIN, 25 6th Av NE, LeMars 51031 •••• Rita EBELING, 324 Crescent Ln, Ft Madison 52627

IN - Marie DUSING, FAMILY ACADEMY, Rt 1 Box 509, Poland 47868; 812-986-2884

ME - Kathi KEARNEY, Box 69, New Sharon 04955; ME & VT K-12 •••• LouAnna PERKINS, Rt 1 Box 22-C, Penobscot 04476; 207-326-8609 (K-8)

MD - Frances MOYER, 4017 William Ln, Bowie 20715

MA - George FOURNIER, RFD 2 Box 101, Brimfield 01010 (French) •••• Adele GARLICK, 96 Coolidge Cir, Northborough 01532 •••• Thomas MAHER, 30 Park St, Wakefield 01880; 617-245-7634 •••• Faith Jones OZAN, 9 Tilehurst Ln, Marblehead 01945 •••• Mario PAGNONI, 76 Emsley Ter, Methuen 01844 •••• Linda ZUERN, Box 619, 5 Depot Rd, Cataumet MA 02534

MI - Kathy DONAHUE, Box 80-B S Superior Rd, Atlantic Mine 49905; K-12 •••• Bonnie MIESEL, 1111 Cricklewood SW, Wyoming 49509 •••• Dinah MORRISON, 76 Latta St, Battle Creek 49015; 7-12 •••• Muriel PALKO, 321 N William, Ludington 49431; K-12

MN - Jeanne BOURQUIN, 1568 McMahan Blvd, Ely 55731 •••• Linda WINSOR, 1927 James Ave, St Paul 55105

NH - Sally EMBER, 284 Water St, Keene 03431 (multicultural education)

NJ - Sandy MADKIFF, MINOTOLA ACTIVITY CTR, 207 Coan Av, Minotola 08341; 609-697-1643; K-12 Eng

NM - Kara BERTHOLF, #1 Rd 6565 NBU4, Kirtland 87417 (certified in CO & NM)

NY - Lyman BARRY, 9297 Shaw Rd, Nunda 14517; 716-468-2650; science •••• Diane CHODAN, RD 1 Box 462, Rome 13440 •••• Cheryl COONEY, 225 Rector Pl, 9R, NY NY 10280 (NY, NJ, MA) •••• Lucretia GABRIEL, 12 Fairway Ct, Albany 12208; science •••• John Taylor GATTO, 235 W 76 St, New York NY 10023 •••• Joyce HOUCK, RR 1 Box 148A, Brant Lake 12815; 518-494-2072; elem •••• Kathi KEAHNEY, 1230 Amsterdam Av #604, New York 10027 •••• Martin MILLER, 3374 Aikens Rd, Watkins Glen 14891; math, sci, accounting •••• Jo MOBERLY, 149 S Main St, Naples 14512 •••• Natalie TATZ, 3320 Bainbridge Av, Bronx NY 10467; 212-654-7918 (elem)

OH - Elizabeth LOWER, 5022 Wabash Dr,

Fairfield 45014; 513-863-2891 (Montessori)

OR - Marilyn LOWE, 503-362-1203 (Spanish K-12, English 7-12) ••• Mary MAYFIELD, 24874 W Brush Creek Rd, Sweet Home 97386; 503-367-2474; 5-12 ••• Marcia SPANI, ALOHA KIDS ACADEMY, 4640 SW 182, Aloha 97007; 503-642-4094; K-8

PA - Diana BASEMAN, RD 3 Box 256 B, Tarentum 15084 ••• Debby BELL, 6 Royal Rd, Palmyra 17078; language ••• Kathy HOLLEGER, 3106 Swede Rd, Norristown 19401 ••• Rick KEPHART, 1 High St, Malvern 19355 (elem)

TX - Linda JONES, 3301 Hemlock, Temple 76504; elem

VA- Scott CHRISTIAN, Rt 5 Box 358, Martinsville 24112; 703-632-3780 ••• Mary FREED, 1825 W Grace St, Richmond VA 23220 (Montessori)

WA - FAMILY ACADEMY (teachers all over WA state), 146 SW 153 Box 290, Seattle 98166; 206-246-9227 ••• Karen FOGLE, 14241 NE Wdnvl Duvall #243, Woodinville 98072; 206-481-2228 ••• Julie & David LOYD, Waldron 98297; (Julie: elem, Spanish, math; David: elem, high school, English, Spanish, Social Studies) ••• Tara SENNETT, 15506 19th Av, Tacoma 33445 ••• Denis WICHAR, Cascade Jr High School, 13900 NE 18th St, Vancouver 98684-7299; 256-6052

WI - Cheryl & Bruce BISHOP, 5148 Bluff Ct, Sturgeon Bay 54235; elem. ••• Alison McKEE, 5745 Bittersweet Pl, Madison 53705; elem, vis. impair

CANADA - Leslie AYRE-JASCHKE, 10409-101 St, Peace River AB T8S 1K7

ELSEWHERE - James A. PETRAIT, St Joseph High School, Plot 3, Rt 2, Frederiksted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands 00840; school 809-772-0455, home 809-778-5761

Lawyers

CT - Frank Cochran, 51 Elm St, PO Box 1898, New Haven 06508-1898; 203-865-7380

DC - Nancy LeSourd & George Grange II, 1925 K St NW, Suite 300, Washington 20006-1115; 202-862-2000

FL - Charles Baron, 167th and NE 6th, NO. 815, N. Miami Beach 33160; 305-770-1410

HI - Tom DiGrazia, DiGrazia Law Office, PO Box 1780, Kailua 96734

ID - Lyle Eliasen, 202 Idaho St, American Falls 83211; 208-226-5138

IA - Craig Hastings, 315 6th St, Ames 50010; 515-232-2501

KS - Austin Kent Vincent, 2222 Pennsylvania Av, Topeka 66605; 913-234-0022

MD - Ray Fidler, 805 Tred Avon Rd, Baltimore 21212; 410-296-6495 ••• Paul Kimberger, 3905 Bexley Pl, Marlow Hghts 20746; 301-899-6933 ••• Dale R. Reid, 7091 Brangles Rd, Marriottsville 21104; 301-549-1322

MA - Eugene Burkart, 267 Moody St, Waltham 02154; 617-899-5337 ••• Susan Ostberg, 41 Warren Av, Harvard 01451; 508-456-8515 ••• John Sandelli, 112 Sladen St, Dracut 01826; 508-957-5528

MI - Norm Perry, 8976 US 31-33, PO Box 241, Berrien Spgs 49103; 616-471-2848

NY - David Pullen, 48 W Main St, Fillmore 14735; 716-567-2229 ••• Seth Rockmuller, RD 1 Box 172E, East Chatham 12060; 518-392-4277

OH - David A. Haffey, 3055 Rodenbeck Dr, Dayton 45432-2662 ••• James Peters, 107 W. Court St, Woodsfield 43793; 614-472-1681

OR - Kim Gordon, Oregon Yacht Club, #27, Portland 97202; 503-238-1069

PA - Mark Semisch, 56 Warden R1, Doylestown 18901

WI - Jack Umpleby, N96W18221 County Line Rd, Menomeonee Falls 53051-1300

WY - Gerald Mason, PO Box 785, Pinedale 82941; 307-367-2134 ••• William H. Twichell, PO Box 1219, Pinedale 82941; 307-367-2413

Professors

The following people are willing to help homeschooling families in developing curriculum, evaluating progress, or in other ways:

Larry Arnoldsen, Box 10 McKay Bldg, Brigham Young U, Provo UT 84602

Graham Ashworth, 423 Fox Chapel Rd, Pittsburgh PA 15238; 412-963-8800

Prof. Robert A. Carlson, College of Ed, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Canada S7N OWO

Sandy Doerfel, PO Box 301331, Escondido CA 92030

J. Gary Knowles, Program in Educational Studies, School of Ed, U of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI 48109-1259

Michael Masny, 43 Burncoat St, Leicester MA 01524; 617-892-8012; certified school psychologist & social worker.

Martin Miller, 3374 Aikens Rd, Watkins Glen NY 14891

Michael J. Murphy, Assoc. Prof., U. of Saskatchewan, College of Education, Saskatoon, Sask., Canada S7N 0W0

Dr. Robert Newman, Assoc Prof Emeritus, Teacher Education, Syracuse U, 137 Hughes Pl, Syracuse NY 13210

Sam B. Peavey, Ed.D., 2307 Tyler Ln, Louisville KY 40205; 502-459-2058

Edward Pino, 189 Antelope Tr, Parker CO 80134

Richard Prystowsky, Professor of English and Humanities, Irvine Valley College, 5500 Irvine Ctr Dr, Irvine CA 92720

Brian D. Ray, National Home Education Research Institute, Western Baptist College, 5000 Deer Park Dr SE, Salem OR 97301-9392

Jack Robertson, 532 Laguardia Pl #398, New York NY 10012-1428

Gary L. Stevens, University of San Francisco, 2486 Pebble Beach Loop, Lafayette CA 94549

Chester S. Williams, ETSU, Box 5518, Texarkana TX 75501; 214-838-5458

Psychologists

CA - Michelle Bush, 2374 Stonyvale Rd, Tujunga 91042; 818-352-0315 ••• Mary Ann Hutchison, 29 Navy St, Penthouse, Venice 90291; 310-281-7711 ••• Hal Jindich, 555 W Middlefield, S-301, Mtn View 94043; 415-969-9981

MA - Michael Masny, 43 Burncoat St, Leicester 01524; 617-892-8012 (certified school psychologist and social worker) ••• Dr. Susan Ott, HC 81, Box 10A, Petersham 01366; 508-724-8892 ••• Paul Shafiroff, Ed.D., Director of Guidance, Southern Berkshire Regional School District, Sheffield 01257 ••• Dr. Paul Daniel Shea, 1450 Beacon St, Suite 801, Brookline 02146; 617-277-42149

NC - Linda Brannon Shamblin & William Shamblin, 219 Wildflower Rd, Asheville 28804; 704-253-6797

OH - Richard George, 1201 30th St NW, Canton 44709

OR - Jan Hunt,PO Box 223, Gabriola, BC V0R 1X0 Canada (prenatal and family counseling)

PA - Dr. Bob Conroy, 1724 Smoky Corners Rd, Williamsport 17701

TX - Steven Gutstein, PhD, 4550 Post Oak Pl, Suite #342, Houston 77027; 713-621-7496

WA - Holy Family Institute, 43 Frontier Rd, Appleton WA 98602 (counselors)

School Districts

The following is a list of school districts that are willingly and happily cooperating with homeschoolers, and who are willing to be listed in GWS as doing so.

One reason for such a list: we want to encourage and reassure school officials who may be hesitant about approving homeschooling and let them know that there are other districts enjoying good relationships with their homeschooling families. Also, families who are willing to move to escape a difficult situation with school officials can have at least some ideas about where to go. (Do bear in mind that not all states require homeschooling families to work with local school districts; in fact, many do not. Nonetheless, a cooperative school district may give homeschooling families access to events or materials even if they are not legally required to approve of or evaluate those families.)

We will only list these school districts under the following conditions: (1) The family has to be not just satisfied but pleased with the cooperation the schools are giving to their homeschooling efforts. (2) The schools themselves have to be happy about being included in the list. If they are uneasy about it, or fear that it may get them in trouble with someone, we'd rather not subject them to that risk.

So - if your district is cooperating with your homeschooling, and you would like them to be on this list, ask them, and let us know if they say to go ahead.

By the way, we would also like to list school districts that would like to help homeschooling families, but have not been able to do so because no families have yet asked them.

CA - Butte County Office of Education, 2120 B Robinson, Oroville CA 95965, James H. Scott, Principal, Home School Program

Lodi Unified School District, 835 W Lockford St, Lodi 95240; 209-369-7411; Don Shalvey, Asst. Supt. - Instruction K-12

Loma Prieta School District, 23800 Summit Rd, Los Gatos 95030; 408-353-2389; Dr. Kenneth Simpkins, Superintendent; Dr. Ruth Bothne, Independent Home Study Program Director

Marysville Joint Unified, 1919 B St, Marysville 95901.

Monterey County Office of Education, 901 Blanco Circle, PO Box 80851, Salinas 93912; Bill LaPlante, Director of Alternative Programs

Mt Shasta Union School District, 601 E Alma St, Mt Shasta 96067; 916-926-3846; Carolyn Briody, Home School Coordinator

Santa Cruz City Schools, Alternative Family Education, 536 Palm St, Santa Cruz 95060; 408-429-3806. Attn: Terry Jones.

IL - Madison Junior High, Southern River Oak Dr, Naperville 60565; Mr. Vergo, Principal.

Naperville Central High School, 44 W Aurora Av, Naperville 60540; Mr. Paulsen, Principal.

(note: these are individual schools, not school districts.)

MA - Cambridge Public Schools, 159 Thorndike St, Cambridge 02141; 617-498-9233. Contact Mr. Fran Foley.

Chatham Public Schools, Chatham MA 02633; Supt. Vida R. Gavin.

Lowell School District, 89 Appleton, Lowell 01852; 454-5431; James McMahon, Asst. Supt. for Curriculum Development.

Rockland Public Schools, Rockland 02370; Supt. Ronald P. Gerhart

Southern Berkshire Regional School District, Sheffield 01257; Director of Guidance, Paul Shafiroff, Thomas A. Consolati, Supt.

PA - Radnor Township School District, Administration Building, 135 S. Wayne Av, Wayne 19087; Dr. John A. DeFlaminis, Supt.

Resource People

The people listed below have experience with the following subject, and are willing to correspond with others who are interested.

Adoption: Kathy Donahue, Box 80-B S. Superior Rd, RR 1, Atlantic Mine MI 49905 ••• Jenny Wright, Quaker City, H.C. 60, Box 50, Charlestown NH 03603, 603-543-0910

Autism: Jill Whelan, 1714 E 51st St, Indianapolis IN 46205

Blindness: Dr[illegible]ld & Kathy Klemp (son/75) N6479 Kroghville Rd, Waterloo WI 53594 ••• Ruth Matilsky, 109 S 4th Av, Highland Park NJ 08904 ••• Alison McKee, 5745 [illegible]ttersweet Pl, Madison WI 53705

Computers: Jack Loranger, MPO 17-R Krogstad Rd, Washougal WA 98671; 206-837-3760; "Electronic Educator" BBS #837-3299 ••• Mario Pagnoni, 76 Emsley Terr, Methuen MA 01844

Custody Disputes: Char Love, PO Box 2035, Guerneville CA 95446-2035. (We maintain a list of others with experience in this area who prefer not to list themselves publicly, and we will forward stamped letters to these people if asked. At press time there are three people on the list; more may add themselves over time.)

Down Syndrome: Elaine Bechtold, 10827 Rosedale Av N, Rt 1 Box 233, Loretto MN 55357-9793; 612-498-7553 ••• Rosemary Firstenberg, PO Box 25266, Seattle WA 98125 ••• Heidi Jarvis, N8373 Center Rd, Gleason WI 54435; 715-873-4050

Ham Radio: Sheryl Schuff, 8156 Lieber Rd, Indianapolis IN 46260; 317-259-4778

Learning Disabilities: ••• Kathy Donahue, Box 80-B S. Superior Rd, RR 1, Atlantic Mine MI 49905 ••• Rosemary Firstenberg, PO Box 25266, Seattle WA 98125 ••• Leslie McColgin, RR 1 Box 146, Cunningham KY 42035 (speech & language pathologist) ••• Laverne Reynolds, 505 Oleander Dr, Palatha FL 32177-6435 ••• Cheryl & Gary Stevens, 3486 Pebble Beach Loop, Lafayette CA 94549 (Special Ed., Chemical Sensitivity)

Montessori: Gloria Harrison, PSC 83 Box R, APO AE 09726 ••• Elizabeth Lowen, 5928 Morningside Dr, Fairfield OH 45015

Physical Handicaps: Janna Books, Box 309-B, Route 2, Santa Fe NM 87505 ••• Kathy Donahue, Box 80-B S. Superior Rd, RR 1, Atlantic Mine MI 49905 ••• Ka[illegible]n Franklin, 3939 Winfield Rd, Boynton Bch FL 33436 (Jessica/80 C.P.) ••• Martin Miller, 3374 Aikens Rd, Watkins Glen NY 14891 ••• Laverne Reynolds, Rt 1 Box 766C, Pomona Park FL 32181-9715 ••• Saunny Scott, 1901 Barker St, Lawrence KS 66044

Single Parents: Janet Hoffman, PO Box 288, Hamburg PA 19526-0288 ••• Diane McNeil, 3131 Cty EE, Baileys Harbor WI 54202 ••• Laura Pritchard, 24860 128th Place SE, Kent WA 98031 ••• Lisa Spector, 203-677-2852 ••• Karen Turner, PO Box 622, Redway CA 95560-0622 ••• SPECIAL, Single Parents Educating Children in Alternative Learning, c/o Amy K. Vanorio, 2 Pineview Dr #5, Amelia OH 45102 ••• Christine Willard, 2090 Pine Ave, Los Osos CA 93402

Traveling Families: Lois & Jim Blumenthal, 1132 Beechwood Dr, Hagerstown MD 21742-3007 ••• Louis & Jennifer Gordon (Katie/81, Patty/84) 10355 Grand Av, Bloomington MN 55420-5228 ••• Arlene Haight (Becky/68, Matt/73) 4150 So US #1, RD 2, Palm Bay FL 32905

Twins: Gloria Harrison, PSC 83 Box R, APO AE 09726

Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Please try to write to the kids who are already listed before sending in your own name. When writing to pen-pals, be sure to put your own name and address on your letter, not just on your envelope.

To be listed here, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. Amanda STRATT (13) 4233 St Clair Av, Studio City CA 91604: sewing, soccer, art ••• PORTER, Star Rt, Blue Lake CA 95525: Quin (12) kayaking, computers, sf; Sean (9) kayaking, bikes, crafts ••• KRAUSE, 16995 Rocky Glen Rd, Perris CA 92570: Julian (5) Nintendo, writing, science; Natasha (3) mermaids, horses, stories ••• MOORE, RR 3, Harley, Ontario N0E 1E0 Canada: Ryan (12) hockey, horses, electricity; Emily (9) ballet, cats, baseball; Danny (7) baseball, hockey, horses; Orrie (4) bicycling, hockey, animals ••• WEBER, 5773 Garden Valley Rd, Roseburg OR 97470: Briana (12) stamps, music, reading; Brent (10) stamps, piano, Nintendo ••• BEACH, 3403 67th St Ct E, Bradenton FL 34208: Evan (12) legos, computers, biking; Megan (9) gymnastics, bicycling, skating; Erin (6) ponies, reading, outdoors ••• Daniel MADSEN (6) PO Box 274, Winton MN 55796; art, fishing, dinosaurs ••• Hannah LASH (11) 5544 Maple Crest, Alfred Station NY 14803; animals, writing, music ••• Catherine TENNAL (6) 5119 C St, Little Rock AR 72205: animals, art, acting ••• Becky JAMIESON (8) Rt 1 Box 65, Dodgeville WI 53533: animals, dance, drawing ••• MOLDOVAN, 243 Bright Star Rd, Valley Springs CA 95252: Kristina (6) friends, horses, ballet; Travis (4) bikes, gym, tinker toys ••• Jessica SALMON (11) PO Box 24, McKenzie Bridge OR 97413; reading, letters, rollerblading ••• Bryan PASTER-TORRES (7) 543 Geneva Av, Philadelphia PA 19120; lego, art, biking ••• Dan BERGIN (12) RR 1 Box 240H, Surry ME 04684; D & D, Skateboarding, drawing ••• PATERSON, SR Box 14, Woodward PA 16882: Shona (10) reading, bikes, bracelets; Willa (7) friends, animals, bikes ••• Kesi STONEKING (11) Rt 1 Box 222H, Keezletown VA 22832; ballet, reading, babysitting ••• Katie FORTUNATO (6) 21 Jan Marie Dr, Plymouth MA 02360; dancing, drawing, dogs ••• Dana NOVAK (5) 1427 Juniper St, Norristown PA 19401; storytelling, reading, music ••• BULLOCK, Box 505, Queen Charlotte City, BC V0T 1S0 Canada: Martin (6) cowboys, computers, painting; Max (3) dinosaurs, cowboys, trains

When You Write Us

Please - (1) Put separate items of business on separate sheets of paper.

(2) Put your name and address at the top of each letter.

(3) If you ask questions, enclose a self-[illegible]ddressed, stamped envelope.

(4) When writing to one of us in particular, write "Holt Associates" or "GWS" on the envelope in addition to the individual's name.

(5) Tell us if it's OK to publish your letter, and whether to use your name with the story. We edit letters for space and clarity.

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Hannah Lash is among those who write for this issue's Focus, "Evaluation vs. Feedback," pages 19-23

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One of things outsiders find most mysterious about kids who learn outside of school (or in some alternative schools) is how they get along without tests or grades. "How do you know how you're doing, if you don't have grades to tell you?" people wonder. When I asked a homeschooling friend of mine how she would explain what it's like to learn without the traditional grading system, she replied, "I don't feel I need grades, because they wouldn't really tell me anything, but I *would* mind if I never got *any* feedback about the things I do. I like to hear specific information about what parts I'm doing well and what parts could be improved."

It would be worthwhile for professional educators to consider this distinction between evaluation and feedback. Even though teachers often act as though tests and grades are mainly meant to be informative ("This test is so we can find out what you need to work on," "Your report card tells you where you need to improve"), these methods of evaluation aren't informative at all. When we asked young people to tell us what kind of feedback is helpful to them, most of them objected to grades precisely because they don't tell you anything useful. "Grades tell you what someone else thinks but not why they think it," writes Rebecca Merrion. Grades don't give you the "constructive criticism you need to improve," says Alex Moody.

If school professionals really wanted to know how to give children useful information about how they're doing, they could learn a great deal from these essays about what kinds of feedback actually achieve this. One important message that comes through is that kids often want a lot of specific and direct commentary, as long as it's given in a respectful way. Another message is that life itself can sometimes provide all the feedback that is needed.

Young people who live without tests and grades are not living in a feedback vacuum; they have many ways in which to get a sense of how their work looks to others and what they might do to improve. Furthermore, kids in school who *do* get grades very seldom use them to learn how they can do better; grades are seen as mysterious pronouncements, labels whose consequences are often severe but whose true meaning is elusive. Perhaps the reason for this is that grades are not primarily *designed* for giving helpful feedback, no matter what teachers may cheerfully say to the contrary. As James Herndon wrote in *How to Survive in Your Native Land*, "How does the school make certain that it will have winners and losers? Well, obviously by giving grades. ... The school's purpose is not teaching. The school's purpose is to separate sheep from goats."

Homeschoolers do fine without grades because grades are not really about feedback in the first place — as the writers intuitively understand, and point out, in the essays in this issue. — Susannah Sheffer

PSOC

Office News & Announcements

[SS:] As we go to press, we've just had to postpone our conference, which had been scheduled for March 13th, because of the big snowstorm that covered the northeast with more than a foot of snow. We have rescheduled the event for May 22nd. The March 13th conference had been completely sold out, but because some people are now unable to make the new date, there *may* be space for others to preregister for May 22nd. We can't predict how things will stand by the time you get this issue, so give us a call if you're interested in trying to attend.

Our conference was to be just the start of what will be a busy conference season for us. Pat is off to the Maryland Home Education Association conference at the end of March, and then to the New Jersey Unschoolers Network conference. Later in the season he'll speak at the North Carolinians for Home Education conference, the Homeschool Associates of New England Conference, and the American Library Association conference (see "Calendar" in this issue and GWS #91 for full information about all these events). He'll do workshops on such topics as "Is College Necessary?" "Trends in Public and Private Education that Affect Homeschooling," "Children in the Legislative Process," "Libraries and Homeschoolers."

Closer to home, I'll be giving a workshop at the International Conference on Technology in Education, held here in Cambridge at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Sixteen-year-old homeschooler Amanda Bergson-Shilcock and I will be doing the workshop together. We won't be talking much about technology, but rather about how Amanda thinks differently about teaching and learning because she's never gone to school. The following week, I'll give an introductory talk about homeschooling to the Phi Delta Kappan society.

Throughout the years, we've often talked about how people can publicize homeschooling in their communities. Ned Vare (CT) made a simple suggestion that would help publicize homeschooling, GWS, and local organizations: "People who have heard about homeschooling through articles or talk shows often have a hard time finding a local group or even one individual who can offer information about it. GWS seems a logical place to have a notice printed so that it could be clipped out and used (and copied) by subscribers directly. If it included space, we could simply add the name and number of our state and local organization. It seems that GWS would benefit from the publicity while word would be spread by readers."

We like the idea of something that will help us reach new subscribers and will help state and local groups at the same time, so we've included a form based on Ned's idea at the back of this issue (see p. 31). Ned suggests posting the notice in libraries, although he does say that his library will only post notices from nonprofit organizations, which means that we technically don't qualify. Maybe some libraries won't have this restriction, though, and most communities have other good locations, too: food co-ops, laundromats, toy stores, bookstores, etc. Let us know if you follow up on this and what kinds of responses you get.

We'd like to hear from kids who are keeping their own records of their work to satisfy the requirements of their local district (or perhaps of a program like Clonlara, which asks that teenagers, in particular, keep their own records). If you're able to, please send us a copy of what you've written up. It would be interesting for others to see what you do with your time *and* how you explain it to someone else.

Thanks to all those who responded to my notice in GWS #91 about interviewing homeschooled adolescent girls (ages 11 to 16). If anyone else is interested, I'd still like to hear from you. Send me your name, age, address, phone number, and tell me how long you've homeschooled (at this point, I'm focusing on girls who have been out of school for at least two years). I am interviewing several girls in person and several others by mail, so let me know if you have a preference.

[SS:] Rasmus Hansen, one of the founders of the Ny Lilleskole (now Friskolen 70) and one of John Holt's closest friends, died on February 1st. I was lucky to have been able to spend some time with Rasmus, and from these visits it was easy to see why John felt such kinship with him. Here's a passage from Holt's Learning All the Time *that shows Rasmus's intuitive genius as he supports young children learning how to read. How different this is from a "reading program"!*

At the Ny Lilleskole ... there is no formal reading program at all - no classes, no reading groups, no instruction, no testing, nothing. Children (like adults) read if, and when, and what, and with whom, and as much as they want to. But all the children know - it is not announced, just one of those things you find out by being in the school - that anytime they want, they can go to Rasmus Hansen, a tall, deep-voiced, slow-speaking teacher (for many years the head teacher of the school), and say, "Will you read with me?" and he will say, "Yes." The child picks something to read, goes with Rasmus to a little nook, not a locked room but a cozy and private place, sits down right beside him, and begins to read aloud. Rasmus does almost nothing. From time to time he says softly, "*Ja, Ja,*" implying "That's right, keep going." Unless he suspects the child may be getting into a panic, he almost never points out or corrects a mistake. If asked for a word, he simply says what it is. After a while, usually about twenty minutes or so, the child stops, closes the book, gets up, and goes off to do something else.

One could hardly call this teaching. Yet, as it happens, Rasmus was trained as a reading teacher. He told me that it had taken him many years to stop doing - one at a time - all the many things he had been trained to do, and finally to learn that this tiny amount of moral support and help was all that children needed of him, and that any more was of no help at all.

And here is an excerpt from Aaron Falbel's thesis about the school:

Rasmus ... told me about what he jokingly referred to as his "reading readiness test." In reality, there was no test at all - Rasmus would wander into the gym and watch the children at play. He described the situation as follows:

> Lis [another teacher] would often have some sort of a game where the children would have to run past each other from opposite sides of the gym. Certain children, however, could not perform this without somehow bothering, nudging, or yelling at the others as they passed by. These were the children who were not yet ready to learn to read. They were too self-conscious, too full of angst, unable to keep their hands to themselves. If I attempted to learn to read at this stage, they would probably fail, and their reading would become a problem for them.

Rasmus, here, is pointing out a simple but profound truth: one of the most important preconditions for learning is that the child must feel at ease with himself or herself. The anxious child cannot focus on, cannot attend to, cannot become immersed in the task of learning to read. For Rasmus ... such things as "reading problems" - in the vast majority of cases - did not indicate anything wrong with the child's brain or even anything contained within the child. Rather, they were symptomatic of an unhealthy relationship bewteen a child and his or her environment.

News & Reports

Should Families Act More Like Schools?

Pat Farenga writes:

The Educational Testing Service of Princeton, NJ, the creators of the SAT and other widely used standardized tests, has put out a policy report entitled *America's Smallest School: The Family* (send $5.50 to ETS Policy Information Center, Rosedale Rd., Princeton, NJ 08541). There is some very interesting information in this booklet. For instance: "Yet the question remains — what are the causes behind these large effects of 'family background' on student achievement? What the father or mother does at work all day is hardly the cause. *And measuring the parents' level of education says nothing about how they are using it to help their children. We need to get behind these measures of convenience to determine what occurs in the home that promotes student learning.* [my emphasis]." This phrase from ETS may be very useful for parents worried about not having college degrees or who otherwise need to prove that they are as capable as any to teach their own children. As you will also see, it also foreshadows what might be a sinister development.

Other interesting facts confirm observations by John Holt and numerous homeschoolers about how it is good books, not programmed reading methods, that make good readers:

—"The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that "achievement in school is consistently related to the number of reading materials in the home... The more types of reading materials in the home, the higher students score in reading..."

—"Students are reading books, newspapers, and magazines a bit less than in 1984, and they do less reading for fun as they grow older. Thirteen-year-olds in the U.S. do less reading for fun than their peers in 11 other countries studied in 1991."

—"Trends in resources available to familes to raise children are not favorable to educational improvement. Family income has stagnated for the last two decades, and would have declined if more and more mothers had not gone to work. More children - one in five - are in poverty than two decades ago; one in eight are on welfare."

However interesting and sad some of this research is, this report also demonstrates why research like this is so dangerous. Not content simply to recommend that society and government give better support to families by providing more access to books and resources, ETS uses this report to propose even more detailed research into families to enable them to be evaluated and treated by education authorities.

They conclude:

"A clear-eyed assessment of the family as school dictates a sobering conclusion that a large proportion of homes are not providing very high platforms for the schools to build on.

"Should we have national educational goals for families, as we do for schools? Would this focus attention on the family rules for doing homework, watching television, reading at home, and getting to school? And on parents' involvement with their children's learning and with the schools they attend?

"Should we use the new National Association of Educational Progress state-by-state assessment system to watch the variation among the states in what occurs in the home, as well as how states rank in their academic proficiency, and how they rank in things like the time spent in school?... And should the focus of reporting the results of international assessments be on the indicators of commitment that societies make to education, as well as how countries compare on test scores? The just-released study of the International Assessment of Educational Progress, published by Educational Testing Service, presents measures of home activities along with scores and measures of school conditions."

How would ETS determine if a family has achieved the national education goals? Since the suggestion comes from the Educational Testing Service I think we can guess. Further, what sort of services would ETS recommend for families not reaching these goals? They offer us a glimpse here: "Policies that deal with family resources, welfare dependency, and poverty among children are also educational policies to the extent that they *make the home a better school* [my emphasis]." Turning families into sub-contractors for school services - monitoring and reporting on homework completed, amount of TV watched, number and types of books present in the house - undermines the essential sovereignity of the family and clearly emphasizes supporting school and its goals over providing families with needed resources, such as food, shelter, and medical care. It isn't hard to imagine that a family requiring such resources would be forced to prove that their homes are or will be "good schools" - however that is defined - first. Further, such recommendations don't even consider those families who do not want to be like schools at all because they prefer other means of educating their children, or because their children have been in school and found that school doesn't work for them. The term and concept of "unschooling" needs to be fought for in the future as schools and politicians embrace recommendations like these that force our families to emulate failed institutions.

Legislative News

Montana: The February 1993 issue of *The Grapevine: Montana Home School News* reports that two bills of concern to homeschoolers died early in the legislative session. One of the bills would have required homeschoolers to sign forms concerning participation in federal programs and return these forms along with the annual notice of intent that they send to their district superintendents. The assistant superintendent who had requested this bill had wanted to eliminate paperwork for the schools, because public schools now send these forms to home and private schools and must prove they notified all the ones in their district before they qualify for federal grant money. *The Grapevine* reports that the bill was cancelled after Representative Wilbur Spring met with homeschoolers and superintendents to discuss other ways of addressing the issue.

The other bill homeschoolers were watching, HB 61, had called for suspending the driver's licenses of students aged 15-18 who were no longer in school. The House Education Committee voted unanimously to table this bill.

North Dakota: House Bill 1476, which was introduced by the North Dakota Home School Association, passed in the House on February 17, 1993, and Senate Bill 2216, which was introduced by the Department of Public Instruction, passed in the Senate on the same day, according to a mailing from the North Dakota Home School Association. HB 1476 would broaden the qualifications parents need in order to homeschool: parents would have to have only *one* of the following: a bachelor's degree; a high school diploma and have taken the National Teacher Exam; be monitored by a certified teacher; have homeschooled in compliance with the law, in North Dakota or elsewhere, for two years; or be under the oversight of the North Dakota Home School Association.

The bill also requires parents to report to the Department of Public Instruction instead of to the local public school. This change, combined with the

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broadening of parent qualification requirements, would reduce the amount of monitoring public schools are required to do.

Senate Bill 2216, the one introduced by the DPI, would require homeschooled children to take aptitude tests as well as the standardized achievement tests now required, and would require that when the composite score on the achievement test is five points lower than the aptitude test score, a plan of adaptation be implemented. The NDHSA objects to this part of the bill, although it does support various changes in the wording of the law that this bill also proposes.

The NDHSA newsletter says that homeschoolers are now working to support the House Bill and to lobby for changes in the Senate Bill.

Washington: The Spring 1993 issue of the Washington Homeschool Organization newsletter reports that homeschoolers in Washington were alerted that a portion of the homeschool law was listed for change, as part of the Executive Request Bill for Performance-Based Education. The change would have deleted the law's present language about the 11 required subjects and hours homeschoolers are required to teach and would substitute "Mastery of Essential Learning Requirements" (part of a larger Education Reform package).

WHO staff called the director of the Governor's Council on Education Reform and Funding and learned that the legal staff had felt it was necessary to change the wording of the homeschool law to insure that all students would be able to receive a Washington State diploma. Because the larger package, of which this small change was to be a part, included changes in graduation requirements for all students, the legal staff had thought it necessary to make it clear that homeschoolers, too, needed to complete these same Essential Learning Requirements. WHO members explained that homeschoolers don't ordinarily earn state diplomas, unless they work through an extension program of a private school or choose to enroll in a public school - thus, they argued, changing the wording of the homeschool law was unnecessary.

The following day WHO received word from the governor's office that "inclusion of the homeschool language in this draft [of the bill] was an error. All mention of homeschooling was eliminated from the 9th draft."

Calendar

April 30-May 1, 1993: National Homeschool Association eastern regional conference in central Massachusetts. For info: SASE to NHA, PO Box 290, Hartland MI 48353-0290; 513-772-9580 or 413-637-2169.

May 7-8: National Homeschool Association western regional conference in Boulder Hot Springs, Boulder, CO. For information: 406-449-7513.

May 7-8: North Carolinians for Home Education conference in Winston-Salem, NC. For information: Spencer Mason, 704-541-5145.

May 7-8: La Leche League NYS West Area Parenting conference in Corning, NY. For info: M.C. Solomkin, 607-737-1118.

May 14-15: Homeschool Associates of New England conference in Danvers, MA. For information: 207-777-0077.

May 22: Holt Associates conference (new date). See office news, this issue.

May 21-22: Florida Parent-Educators Association curriculum fair at the Orlando Delta Resort. For information: FPEA, Monte Hancock, 406 Dartmouth, W Melbourne FL 32901-6948; 407-723-1714.

June 11-13: Clonlara Home Based Education Program conference in Toledo, OH. For info: Clonlara, 1289 Jewett St, Ann Arbor MI 48104; 313-769-4515.

June 19: Alternative School/ Homeschool workshop with John Taylor Gatto and Linda Tagliaferro at Central Presbyterian Church, New York City. For info: 718-423-0928.

June 26: American Library Association conference in New Orleans, LA. For information: Susan Scheps, 216-991-2421.

We are happy to print announcements of major homeschooling events, but we need plenty of notice. Deadline for GWS #93 (events in July or later) is May 10th. Deadline for GWS #94 (events in September or later) is July 10th.

Clonlara School Home Based Education Program

Clonlara School Home Based Education Program is one of a kind. It provides home education families with a comprehensive, innovative program. With Clonlara School, home educating parents have CHOICES galore.

Enrollment in Clonlara School gives families the peace of mind that assocation with a fully-functioning, innovative, private school provides. Parents receive help in designing and operating an individualized home based education program. Counseling and guidance on every aspect of educating are as near at hand as parents need for them to be and ask for them to be. All dealings with outside officials are handled with and for a family by Clonlara staff (if necessary/desired by parents).

Clonlara School Home Based Education Program serves all age ranges -- early education through secondary. In short, ALL of the benefits of private school enrollment are available to home educating enrollees.

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Clonlara School
1289 Jewett St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Pat Montgomery, Ph.D.
Director
(313) 769-4515

Family vs. Individual: Maintaining the Balance

These writers are responding to Susan Zacharakis-Jutz's letters in GWS #91.

The Good of the Whole

Barbara Benson (IN) wrote to Susan:

In the middle of last night, after I had changed one of my 3 year olds' soaking wet training pants, I meditated on your concern about "necessary interruptions" in family life. As a parent of 3-year-old twin boys and a 6-year-old boy I sometimes feel a good part of my time is spent on necessary interruptions. Almost all of our activities center around our home. The 6 year old is of course homeschooled and I have a home business networking some herbal health care products. My husband is an attorney whose office is upstairs in our home.

What seems to help my peace of mind is to view our family unit itself as a kind of living organism. We are all obviously connected in a deep way to one another. There are definite times when any one individual in the family must express and preserve their privacy and working-alone time, but many times we also look at the good of the whole family organism.

In your instance of canning and then your infant son waking up from his nap, it seemed to me that service to the family organism was called for on the part of your older daughter. Was she interrupted? Yes, but another way of looking at it is that she was also taught to serve and be responsible to legitimate requests of the larger family unit, just as she has learned to be responsive to the animals in your care. If interruptions are dealt with flexibly and openly, without a lot of self-judgment, then a moment of learning about the good purpose of family negotiations is experienced.

Since your family is quite good at working out daily routines, you might anticipate some of these unscheduled interruptions. If you know you will be involved in a time-consuming project like canning, you could negotiate with your eldest beforehand to be willing to take responsibility for some childcare if the need arises. Perhaps there is some form of reward for this service or perhaps you can negotiate with her so that she can have uninterrupted time with you, or by herself, when you know she'll be able to have it. Why not make the whole topic of private time vs. family time (especially with a new baby) a subject for your family discussions? It may be bothering you philosophically more than it is them. Child-led learning and children's work should be respected but so should flexibility and service to family and community.

Some things, like household chores, aren't much fun even for many adults. By employing Grandpa's Rule - get the stuff you like least done first and then there's more time for play - we function better as a family. With my 6 year old we also have had a 21-day good habit program. When he engages in certain habits constantly for 21 days (the current one is making his bed, brushing his teeth without me nagging, and helping pick up the playroom at night) there is an agreed-upon reward. A recent one was having a meal out with his parents while a sitter stayed with the twins.

It sounds to me like you have a creative and caring family. I encourage you to be the unique family organism that you are. Take the good ideas from books and well-intentioned people like me that really work for you and let go of the rest. Don't let anyone else's convictions be a limitation on the wonderful organic unfolding of your own family life in each present moment.

Contributing to Family Life

From a longer letter that Agnes Leistico (CA) sent to Susan:

I was so impressed with what you wrote about how your family handles the everyday family responsibilities that arise - both the planned and the unexpected. ... Although this aspect of family life is not even touched upon in my book, *I Learn Better by Teaching Myself*, it was (and still is) an important part of the family and learning dynamics going on constantly within our family. Perhaps the reason I did not even touch upon how it affects our learning situation in our home is that it is something I have just taken for granted (until I read your article!).

Each member in our family is expected to take some responsibility for the well-being and orderly conduct of our family life. I can't say that it was a conscious decision so much as simple expectation that if you belong to our family you will be expected to contribute your share of responsibility. It is as much a part of our lives as breathing!

But there has been plenty of room for compromise and discussion among us as to what is appropriate for each individual. Chores (I prefer to call them responsibilities) have been very much part of our learning experience. I never looked on it as an interruption of my children's pursuits of their learning interests. If a particular interest had to be interrupted because of a planned or unplanned responsibility, so be it. That is part of life!

Of course, there have been many times when the responsibility was unattractive compared to a more interesting pursuit. Then it is necessary to evaluate just how necessary it is to do the chore. At times it is clear-cut as to how necessary the responsibility is - like when you had to ask Frances to watch David while you finished canning (something you could not readily put aside for a while). Other times (more often than I like to admit) the necessity for completion of the task in the manner I desire or in the time frame I have in mind is not as absolute.

How well I remember the times when I was growing up that I tested my limits with my parents over weeding (I grew up on a farm so weeding was a necessity). That was one way I learned that my participation in this activity really counted for the well-being of the entire family. I learned a deep-seated sense of responsibility as well as feeling a sense of satisfaction for contributing to the family and pride of workmanship.

My children have rebelled at times at tasks they have been expected to perform. Sometimes I lose my cool, but usually I have to stop to rethink how and when (or even if!) the task should be done. It is not always smooth.

I now have the advantage of having older children. When they were the ages of your children, there were many times I wondered if they would really grow up to be responsible adults. Was it worth the hassle we sometimes experienced? It certainly would have been easier to do all the wash myself, sweep the floors, wash the dishes, etc. I am reaping the harvest now watching our son in college handle laundry, shopping, cleaning, etc. as ordinary events of his life. Our 16-year-old daughter works at the local drive-in movie. Her boss told my husband she is one of the best at keeping the place clean (though to look at her room, I have to wonder!).

... In "Too Many Activities" you throw out many questions concerning the importance of recognizing the needs of other family members and to consider those needs in the choices the family

makes about activities. ... Yes, we did find our family getting caught up in too many activities and had to learn for ourselves how and when to set limits. Circumstances determined who made the decision to set limits and what the financial limits were. In our situation, if I felt stress from an activity that indicated that the activity was not good for the family. We usually did not participate in an activity that infringed upon another family member's time if that family member did not willingly allow this. We are constantly re-evaluating our commitments. Sometimes we make a wrong choice, but that, too, is a learning experience. Over the years I have become more comfortable with accepting things in our life that do not match up with someone else's unrealistic (for us) goal.

Hard to Depend on Parents

Anne Brosnan (KY) writes:

I would like to respond to Susan Zacharakis-Jutz's letter about children and activities and how they affect the family. One thing that was not clear to me in Susan's description of her situation was whether or not her son Reuben did more activities besides piano lessons. She says, "I started to ask myself whether our children's requests for a certain class or activity were reflective of a genuine internal desire to learn something or a reflection of our society, which seems to be caught up in a lesson, class, meeting, activity craze." If Reuben is on a "lesson, class, meeting, activity" craze which is seemingly nothing but "a reflection of our society" and is driving his family crazy, I would say that something needs to be changed. But if Reuben simply takes piano lessons, enjoys these lessons, and wants to continue to take them (as Susan's letter suggests), it's something different. I think that in that case his request for a *certain* class is reflective of a genuine internal desire to learn something (or *one* thing).

I have developed a strong interest in bluegrass music this past year, and become actively involved in the local bluegrass community. I play bluegrass banjo with a local band now and it's become my main interest in life. Even though I have talent in other areas, I've found that not only do I have a talent for playing the banjo, I love to do it more than anything I've ever done before, and I love bluegrass music and everything connected with it. Right now this means I have to go to banjo lessons and jam sessions, but there are also concerts we sometimes go to on weekends. The summertimes are filled with outdoor bluegrass festivals that can cover four days or more.

I'm now 16 and am going through the process of learning to drive and getting my license, so some time soon I'll be able to drive myself to the places I need to go. But for the past year I've had to rely on my parents for transportation, and, as in Susan's case, it takes at least half an hour to get anywhere, since we live in a hilly, rural area. We also don't have a big budget so we have to think about things like gas money and the admission cost of shows and festivals.

I try to think about things from my parents' point of view and understand and appreciate the time and money that they put into chauffeuring me around. Yet the fact that almost my entire life is devoted to bluegrass and that I simply *can't do* the practical things like drive or pay for lessons makes it hard to face the times when Mom doesn't feel like driving me to what I consider a very important jam session or concert. I try to help out by doing things I can do: a lot of chores and housecleaning, doing my own laundry and ironing, cooking meals, or helping out on the farm. When I do happen to get a little pocket money I pay my own way into shows or pay for other things I need, like postage stamps.

I'm looking to get a job or some other source of income, and when I get my license I won't be a burden on my parents anymore, so all this hassle won't be an issue with us. But my past experiences have made me want to side with the child if there's ever a case of a child wanting to do some sort of activity and the parents are refusing because they feel they don't have the time or money. Of course I may be prejudiced because I'm a child in the same predicament. But I know what it's like when you know there's one thing you like to do and you feel like you just want to do it at all costs. For a while you rely on your parents to support you in this interest, and that time can be very frustrating. I think that during that time the parents should do all they can to help the child, because the child is pretty much helpless. After a while, the child can hopefully earn his own income and drive himself around.

There can come a time when a child can be involved in too many activities and he needs to sit down (or be sat down) and think about what really matters to him and what he really likes to do, and be limited to just a few activities. Besides being involved in bluegrass, I also play on a YMCA basketball team. This requires rides to practices and games. If my parents wanted me to stop playing I could understand their position and feel it was fair, even though I really love basketball and think it's OK to have two interests. The difference between bluegrass and basketball for me is that I think bluegrass is my life's work and that I can really get somewhere with it if I try, so it's very important to me that I can continue with it. I would say that if Reuben's main interest is piano and he sincerely likes taking piano lessons, he should be able to continue them if that is what he really wants to do.

Claudia Brosnan, Anne's mother, adds:

In this case it seems to our family that there is a big difference between music lessons and other social activities. I realize this may not be true for a child of 6. It has struck me, however, how important music can become to homeschoolers and how many of them are so talented and serious about it. I'm pretty sure that homeschoolers are not intrinsically more talented than non-homeschoolers. Maybe it's that creative arts are not nourished by schools. It may be that these are not the frills that schools seem to think they are, but basic human activities that contribute more to making our children whole persons than the subjects schools replace them with (math and science can be creative, but you have to be a creative person first, not a rote learner).

I want to say that we really have not spent a lot of time going to lessons (one year of piano and one year of banjo for Anne, half a year of clarinet for her younger sister Gaea) and no time at all forcing practice. Anne used to play the piano all the time. It was sometimes exasperating. Now it's the banjo. Gaea plays her clarinet. They both have teachers that they go to twice a week, and when they get there they play some of the music they have been playing during that week or that they are going to be working on. Gaea plays piano music that we have collected and music that she finds at the library. Anne's teacher writes out in tablature songs that she asks for or that he happens to have on hand. I don't think either of their teachers know what songs they will be playing when they come in or have any particular expectations about how they should practice. Maybe this is unusual, but it certainly is easy on me. Also, I usually have to get out to the grocery store once a week anyway, so I do it on lesson days. Of course, things are easier as your kids get older, in some ways, although they can make more disturbance when they want to do something you'd rather not do!

Treating Them With Respect

From Julie Scandora (WA):

I find what helps most in getting cheerful help from the children is treating them, as well as their work, with respect. What to us may seem trivial, to them may be very important. I suspect Susan Zacharakis-Jutz's daughter viewed her art project as just as important as Susan's canning, and just as difficult to interrupt.

It is too easy for adults, especially us parents, to abuse our position, to treat our children as servants, to make demands without so much as a "please" or "thank you." Too often I've seen an adult sitting, resting, and not at all busy tell a child to do something for him. Not infrequently the child is busy at some task of her own, but is nevertheless expected to jump at the request. I think this feeling of being used unfairly is often at the base of uncooperative behavior.

Certainly I saw my husband misuse the children a few times. This prompted me to reexamine my own behavior with them. As a result I became more conscious of what I was doing, made an effort to be

more respectful, and now find I have no problem getting help.

This is what I do. First, I do for myself. That is, if I am perfectly capable of doing a task unaided (such as getting my book), I do so. I expect the same of the children. Second, if I need someone else to help or take on a job, I ask nicely - pleasant voice, often a request rather than a demand, and always "please." Third, there is give and take. If someone must attend to an unexpected task, sometimes I will be the one, sometimes one of the children will be. Fourth, when the tables are turned and a child needs my help, I am at least as responsive as I expect her to be for me.

Despite it all, sometimes the children just don't realize all that is done by the parents, including the interruptions undergone. So tell them! (No martyrs, please.) They should know that give and take is happening. However, I have found that children are most observant. Given their due respect, they will cooperate.

Susan Zacharakis-Jutz also wonders about too many activities. It's ironic; I have been wondering about just the opposite. I let my children, ages 5, 8, and 10, be in total control about outside activities. If they want to take lessons, join a club, or engage in sports, then they will. Right now they have absolutely no desire for any of these activities.

My concern was that my pro-homeschooling/anti-forced schooling position was turning the children off to being taught by anyone but me. Anyone else think this way? But I do believe in trusting the child, so I refuse to force activities or lessons upon them. And despite my concern, they're doing fine. The oldest is teaching herself to play the keyboard and piano. All are figuring out on their own how to swim while loving being in the water. And they get plenty of exercise and fresh air without organized sports. (I should add that I am strongly against organized sports but totally in favor of pick-up games.)

The oldest two would like to have more friends their age nearby, but they are not willing to meet any through such organized activities. Since the choice remains theirs, they can't be hurting too much. All this does make me wonder if most kids aren't overinvolved in outside activities and if given a choice would choose very few if any.

Part of Family Life

Lee Criscuolo of Virginia writes:

We have two children: Kelly (5) and Robin (3). When I am working on something, it is a rare exception when I'm *not* interrupted to tie a shoe, break up an argument, help reach a toy, kiss a boo-boo, etc. And sometimes there is just no way around it - Kelly or Robin must be interrupted to help deal with some minor crisis. Sometimes they help cheerfully; other times they resent the interruption. That's OK. They don't have to be happy about it always. I am sometimes annoyed when I'm interrupted, too. When I interrupt them, I just explain to them, at the time or shortly afterward, why their help was needed right at that minute. I also point out that I too sometimes have to do A when I'd rather be doing B. It's all part of family life.

Minimizing Stress

Barbara Froehling of Illinois wrote to Susan:

I have four children similar in age to your family: Natasha (9), Sonya (7), Nadia (4), and Andrei (9 months). Tasha and Sonya asked for music lessons persistently for six months before I sought instructors. My two oldest children have been taking Suzuki music lessons for one and a half years now. They continue to enjoy the lessons, and I have no problems when it comes to practicing. On Tuesdays I drive sixty miles one way for lessons. My daughters are each pursuing a different instrument. The piano and violin instructors have been very cooperative in setting up lessons so that we receive instruction on the same afternoon. This includes group lesson for the violin, too. The group lesson for piano is held on another day of the week, and I rarely attempt to make it. I have noticed that the Suzuki instructor is very specific about technique which is carried through all of the pieces. This gives me a solid guideline to follow in home practice. If you and your child's instructor have an amicable relationship, you may be able to work out an every-other-week arrangement with enough home instruction for you to carry out until the next lesson. Suzuki is well-designed for the home educator because of the total parental involvement expected.

I have purposely chosen not to get my children involved in a myriad of activities outside the home. My stress level at having to juggle the scheduling has been my determining factor. I do not want to be an unpleasant person to live with. To me, being able to master an instrument is a great gift, one I'm willing to go the distance with for my kids.

I am fortunate enough to have a sitter for my two younger children when we travel for lessons. There is also enough time between lessons for me to do weekly shopping. Have you a support group in your area? As another idea, a city homeschool teen may be willing to apprentice at your home learning animal husbandry, food preservation, etc. from you and in return that person could pay for the instruction with babysitting services.

I too have had to rely on my older children to help me with my younger children. At times my older children are annoyed by this. Who isn't annoyed by being interrupted in the middle of a focused activity? I know that I am, but such is the life of a parent. Recently my daughter received a book from the *American Girl* collection. The story tells of the daily activities in the life of a 9-year-old frontier girl of a hundred years ago. It is amazing, the family responsibility that is expected of the girl. I think it was an eye-opener for my oldest daughter. I do not want my child's life to be like the girl in the story's, but it is an indicator of what a child is capable of. I do expect some assistance from my children at whatever level they are capable of. However, I do keep in mind that they were not consulted in my decision to have a large family. I find it a difficult balance to strike.

One Family's System

Melissa Johnston (PA) writes:

When my children were public/private school students (yes we tried both) I felt that their activities outside of school were very important, and I did everything possible to rearrange schedules so that each child could attend an activity. This led to many stressful situations and arguments. "Why do I have to go to Little League practice; I don't even play?" "Do I have to go to play time with you guys again?" "If I don't want to go to _____, why am I going?" Meanwhile, my husband and I were finding it harder and harder to convince (or maybe coerce) our children into going places that we *had* to be at for a meeting - the attorney's office, doctor's office, accountant's office, employer's office. We were so busy dragging these children to their very important activities that when my husband or I had a very important activity to tend to they rebelled and refused to come with us.

Now, I am not saying that a parent's activities are more important than a child's; this is just not the case. Activities my husband and I deemed very important were things that helped the family run smoothly and as a community: purchase/grow food, secure housing or work on maintaining the home, keep individual members of the group healthy, keep a financially sound community operating. We do not *make* our children attend things that they feel uncomfortable doing. We explain the situation to them and try to make other arrangements if they don't want to come. We also do this for meetings we must attend as adults (attorney/accountant) and family affairs (weddings/funerals).

The reality of this plan is that it does not always work. There are times when we all must do something we do not want to do. The beauty of it is that everyone feels much better about going/doing something they dislike if their dislike is expressed and accepted. It took a number of years to come up with this formula, but it is in place now and working quite well.

I am at home with the children every day; my husband works out of town and is only home on the weekends. We have decided to do as many group activities as we can on those days and permit the children to pick two individual activities that they would like to pursue during the course of the year. Group activities are still more important than individual activities because of the limited amount of time we have together as a family. We do not force

the issue, though. If someone has something that they must do, then so be it. This also means that this person cannot expect everyone else to reschedule activities. If one child wants to go roller skating and the rest of the family is planning on staying home and working on a project, the child should find his or her own way to go roller skating. If a parent has to do something that does not involve the group, he or she is expected to find the least disruptive way of carrying it out. This does not hold true for the two activities the kids choose to be involved with during the course of the year. One child takes a gymnastics class and a dance class once a week. The other takes an art class at various eight-week intervals and is not interested in any other organized activity.

An example of how our system works (or does not) occurred this past Friday. I had recently located a homeschooling support group and decided to try to attend their scheduled playgroup on Friday afternoon, thus killing two birds with one stone: the entire family would be together and the children would be meeting new friends. I discussed this with everyone two or three days before we were to go and no one raised any objections. However, when the time came to get in the van and actually go, my son said he did not want to go. OK, any particular reason? Yes, he said we had traveled enough lately and he just wanted to stay home. We had just returned from a trip to Vermont the previous weekend and this playgroup was a 45-minute trip. Sounded like a good reason, except our daughter wanted to go meet new friends. The battle began. I told them to find another activity that they would like to do today and that we would attend the next playgroup in two weeks. "But what if he doesn't want to go in two weeks?" asked my daughter. Good question. I told them both that since he did not want to attend today and did not give us any indication of this when we proposed the idea that he would have to have an alternate plan ready when we attend the next playgroup. Otherwise, he would have to attend with us to be fair to his sister. OK. The only problem left was that no one could come up with an acceptable activity for the family to do as a group that day. I then suggested that we see a movie, which was met with much applause, and off we went. Everyone felt that his or her needs were being met and the explanation that each person gave for wanting to go or stay was accepted.

What would have happened if the playgroup had been a one-time activity? I thought about this and decided that my daughter and I would have attended the playgroup and left my son and husband to find their own activity. We then would have regrouped later in the weekend and probably gone to see the same movie.

As I said earlier, this system does not work 100% of the time. But if, as a parent, you truly believe that each person has the right to decide what he or she wants to do, and then realize that they must do these activities *within* the structure of a family, community, society, life becomes less stressful.

Homeschooling an Only Child

Liz Sedore of Washington sent us a copy of a survey she conducted of homeschooling families with only children. Here are some of the results:

Q. What do you say when people ask you, "How do you make sure your child has socialization skills?"

"My daughter has more outside activities for her age than the average public school child."

"We make sure he has time with friends, cousins, church activities. He is enrolled in an outside class."

"She takes ballet and ceramic lessons; attends Sunday school and support group activities (field trips, roller skating, meetings, testing); gets together with other homeschoolers for lunch and play."

"She gets those skills from one-to-one contact, not from big groups."

"I explain that true socialization is the ability to interact with other people (different ages, different backgrounds, etc.) and my son has plenty of opportunities to develop the appropriate skills."

"You must make your own. I feel parental responsibility in this area. Therefore, we started a student enrichment group for homeschoolers. Here she can socialize with a variety of ages - not be limited to peers her own age. This group includes a teenage group."

"No one has asked this for years - anyone who has met my child knows it's not a problem. When we began homeschooling, I was careful to keep a mental list of 'socialization opportunities' he'd participated in. People soon realized that socialization was a non-issue."

Q. Please list any "typically adult" activities that your child participates in.

family grocery shopping, prepares meals, helps teach other students, delivers meals to shut-ins, helping with bills, remodeling home, eats out alone, volunteers at nursing home, ushers at church, volunteer work, farming, helps in home business, cares for animals, had own business, asking for help in restaurants and stores, learning to weld, has own checkbook, paid employment, staying alone, planning and preparing music recitals

Q. What are the major difficulties in homeschooling a single child? How do you deal with these difficulties?

"Finding an available playmate. Too many hours on own./Drive a lot to pick up friends. Take to sports activities."

"Projects and activities would be more fun and exciting if done in a group./I tried to set up some group activities with other homeschoolers."

"Sometimes one-on-one gets a bit too intense. Sometimes she wants more peer activities./Try to be involved in children's group activities. Take enhancement classes. Let her work independently."

"[Lack of] brainstorming and group discussions - both of which can stimulate divergent thought./She and I can often brainstorm together. She listens now and often participates in family discussions dealing with politics, education, religion."

"No one to compare with or challenge her skills as siblings would./Go to homeschool meetings to keep in touch with others."

"Whenever a project or an activity needs another pair of hands, the hands belong to Mom. It would be nice to be able to say, 'Why don't you kids build a...' without committing myself to help. This is much less a problem as my son has aged. It would still be nice to have more game players around, though. I also think there would be some real advantages to having older siblings teaching younger ones./They're so minor we just don't worry about them. After all, having one child at home is normal for us, and really doesn't seem odd or difficult in any area of our lives, including homeschool."

Q. What are the major advantages in homeschooling a single child?

"One-on-one. Can usually have the time to notice strengths and weaknesses that may be overlooked in large families."

"I love being able to meet my child right where he's at in any given subject. I can spend as much or as little time as is necessary in each area of his learning. We are able to have a very flexible schedule."

"More mobility to travel and experience things than a larger family would [have]."

"He is an independent child because of being an only child, so therefore he doesn't rely on someone else to keep him entertained. He has from day one been able to keep himself busy with play and other things."

Q. Please list any other comments.

"I am a single mother with a single child. He is naturally curious and is progressing well academically. But the time I've felt most rewarded for my time is when my son has told me about incidents with other children when he stood apart for what he thought was right. He has an inner strength and knowledge that enables him to act independently."

"With one child, you can pursue an interest - right then when they are interested. ... Don't focus on and continually verbalize the 'handicap' of being an only child. We tell people, 'Our daughter is our oldest and our youngest.'"

"I do work part time and it's easy to take my daughter with me. If I had several children at home it would be impossible."

Challenges & Concerns

Can Parents Help with Speech Difficulty?

Karen Hadley of Arizona writes:

My son was born three and a half years ago. At first they thought he had a genetic disorder called Seckel Syndrome, but after a year he was reexamined and the diagnosis was changed. Through the few tests that could be done, all that could be concluded was that he was microcephalic, which means that he has a small head. We were advised that all we could do was wait and see how he progressed to see if this condition had affected him in any way.

In most areas he has progressed fairly normally, whatever that is. But in the area of speech he has not. He never babbled as a baby and didn't say mama until he was almost 3. Now at 3 1/2 his vocabulary consists of mama, no, what (without the "t" sound), wow, yeah, and oh. He makes an unusual humming noise instead of talking and understands most everything. He is very reluctant to try new words or sounds and if he does he rarely pursues them. I haven't tried to force him to talk because my feeling has been that he was not capable yet.

I have had him evaluated at 2 1/2 and now at 3 1/2 at our University Speech and Hearing, Language Development Center. They have found his hearing to be normal and indications are that he has the necessary tools for speech. They have now recommended that he have a neurological and psychological evaluation, which we will do, but they also recommend a total-language enriched preschool program. Some of their language even suggests that "such an intensive program is rarely available except in the public school setting."

Needless to say I have no intention of sending my son to public school. I would consider a program in a private preschool or speech development program if it becomes necessary, but my instincts tell me that as a loving, nurturing family there should be more we can do. I would appreciate any suggestions people might have.

Dare to Be Different

Andy Migner (MA) sent us a copy of a letter she wrote to Ken Lipman-Stern ("Coping With Doubts," GWS #90):

We are a homeschooling family of very similar make-up: two boys ages 6 (Christopher) and 3 (Taylor). We decided five years ago (after reading *Teach Your Own*) that we would homeschool. So while we are new to being of legal school age, it doesn't feel like we are just starting out. Over the past five years, we've read a lot, become familiar (though only peripherally involved) with several homeschooling groups, talked at length (sometimes daily) with homeschooling friends, and subscribed to this wonderful publication. All of this has helped us to walk through and sort out a lot of fears and doubts about this somewhat radical choice that we have made for ourselves and our children. As I've watched my own doubts ebb and flow, I've noticed that the more confident I feel about our decision to homeschool, the more confident Christopher is with being seen as a homeschooler.

All of Christopher's neighborhood friends are mainstream children, and they are the children with whom he plays most frequently. This past fall we spent a lot of time helping him to deal with the things these children said to him: "You won't learn anything," "You'll be stupid," "You won't go to college" (!). To counter these we reminded him of all that he was learning and *had* learned without the benefit of school. Truth inevitably relieves fear.

I do make an effort, every two to three weeks, to get together with another homeschooling family or group to provide that sense of identification and camaraderie that it sounds like you are wanting for Sam. I also find it helpful to point out homeschoolers in literature and history (the more I look the more I find). Pen-pals are also a great way to connect with homeschoolers.

Christopher's interactions with friends in the neighborhood of late have been strengthening (rather than undermining) our decision to homeschool. It is so sad to see his gentle, spirited friends becoming hardened, dulled, and rough just five months into kindergarten!

My sons, like yours, are becoming better friends with each other every day. It is a pleasure to watch and I know that it has been made possible by our homeschooling. Keep your eyes on the good, on the strengthening family relationships, on those magic moments, on the joy of learning and growing together. Nothing so right could be wrong. And I encourage you and Sam both to continue to "dare to be different."

She Resists Teaching

Karen Price Herman (MO) writes:

"I'm not cut out for this," Peri told me, sitting delicately on the edge of the couch that didn't have any clothes strewn across it. The topic was housekeeping.

"What are you cut out for?"

"I need to get lots of money so I can hire a maid."

"OK. Then you probably should go to school, do your homework, get straight As, get a scholarship to a really good college, and get a high-prestige job. That's a good way to make lots of money. If you continue to homeschool, you will probably go to college, and get a job that won't make so much money, but that you will really like."

That was a very biased tirade I gave her, but we'd been having a rather heated discussion about picking up the living room. We have discussions like that frequently around here. When I read books people have written about their homeschooling experiences, they never seem to have had problems eliciting cooperation from their children. Their kids seem eager to study, to try new things, and reasonably willing to help out around the house. I wonder if Peri's dad and I are just too undisciplined ourselves to get her to help us, or if Peri is unusually resistant to doing things she doesn't want to do.

I know she resists being taught. I can always tell if I've been too pushy with things I want her to learn: she tells me that she is perfectly happy to live in a cardboard box for the rest of her life if it means avoiding schoolwork now. Peri has never been to school, and we have not pushed her much at home, except on rare occasions when we've felt insecure enough to try to teach her something like phonics.

I wonder if there are other children out there who are so fiercely determined to control their learning that their parents really worry about their learning anything.

Of course, Peri has learned, and is probably about at the same level as other 7 year olds. And I suspect that once she starts reading on her own, her studies will take a form that I can more easily relate to (after all, it's been a long time since I was pre-literate). At the same time, I wonder if she is learning something that she couldn't learn in school, something more valuable. Not just learning her talents, or independence, but learning her own mind, maybe even learning something that I can't imagine.

I'd like to hear from others who have children who don't cooperate easily, who resist and question every attempt to teach them or to get their help cleaning up. Or maybe some of you who are learning at home recognize yourselves in Peri and can give me an insight into her point of view.

Getting Along When Philosophies Differ

Victoria Moran (MO) writes:

Reading Pamila Daniel's lament about compulsory testing and of Renata

Leuffen's tragic situation with the German officials (both in GWS #91) really made me grateful to be living where I am. Missouri's homeschool law has been called the best in the country: it's clearly laid out, compliance is not complicated, no testing is required and parents do not have to report to anyone, although we keep records should we ever be questioned by the civil authorities. In this idyllic state, one would think there would be thousands of unschoolers. Unfortunately, there are not. This is not to say that there aren't homeschoolers here. In the Kansas City area alone, there are support groups representing, I have been told, almost 200 families. Of those, I have met only *two* other families that share my educational philosophy.

I hate to see homeschooling dividing along religious lines, but that seems to be the case: almost all the homeschoolers here are fundamentalist Christians and basically do "school at home." I don't completely understand why this is so; I don't know of any Biblical admonition stating, "Thou shalt use a purchased curriculum," but that's the way it works out. Although my religious views differ from those of the fundamentalists, we have no problems in this regard, although I must admit that when the fundamentalist children come to play, I put away my books on non-Christian religions and my Buddha statue. Nevertheless, I appreciate the children's politeness and the parents' kindness.

The problem is that my child and these children live in such different worlds. We are committed environmentalists and do a lot of ecology in our study of science; many of the children we know are brought up to be somewhat suspect of "saving the earth." In addition, our homeschooling differs dramatically from theirs. We use no textbooks other than Saxon math, and we use a 7-day week and a 12-month year to meet our state's 1000-hour school requirement instead of the typical school week and year. That way we can take off to travel or allow for the miraculous learning opportunities life presents when you haven't scheduled them away. (Last year, we took two "school year months" to go to Taiwan, China, Tibet, Nepal, and India. We brought a workbook with us, but sent it back the second week. It would have been absurd to waste a minute of this spectacular learning experience doing capitalization exercises!)

I am extremely pleased with the way we homeschool and the way Rachael is growing and learning and discovering life on Earth. It does not make it easy to befriend the other homeschooling children in our area, however. They're as structured and time-bound as children in school. The friendships unschooling children build seem to depend on long, unrushed days together of exploring and imagining. That can't be done between 3:30 and 5 on the days no one has a piano lesson or a ballet class. Providentially, one of the other unschooling families here has a daughter near Rachael's age, and they are fast friends. This family will move in a few months, however; I'm already dreading it.

My question is, how do other unschoolers relate to more structured homeschoolers? Are your children able to become good friends with some of these children? I would also be interested to hear from GWS readers who do consider themselves fundamentalist Christians about how I can best relate to other mothers here who are of this persuasion. Should I pretend to espouse the same beliefs they hold, or be honest about my religion (I'm a Quaker) or my politics (liberal)? Am I right to hide the Buddha statue? Would this be offensive? I did leave a book on the shelves about meditation, and one little girl immediately asked me what meditation was. I answered her as best I could, trying to be careful not to overstep what I understand to be her family's beliefs.

Getting answers to these questions is important to me because Rachael prefers the company of homeschooled children to those who go to school. Homeschoolers seem to develop at a much more natural rate rather than going at society's hurry-up pace, and they have far more common sense and less peer dependency. Homeschooled children are almost invariably delightful human beings, regardless of what "brand" of homeschooling they're getting. I would simply like to know how best to go about making friends with more of them and their parents.

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Watching Children Learn

Giving Help

Theo Giesy (VA) writes:

Ellen (4) was writing on a chalk board. After writing her name and showing me, she called me to see another message. She said, "I wrote 'on'." She had written something like this [Theo includes a drawing of a big letter "O" and a smaller "N" underneath it and to the left].

I said that for it to be "on," "the 'O' has to be first." I wrote "ON" and "NO" and repeated that to write "on" you have to write "O, N." Then I went back to work. After a moment Ellen came running up and said, "You're wrong, Mom. I did write the 'O' first." I went back to the board, showed her that people read this way (left to right), and that the 'O' had to be to the left of the 'N.' She said "Oh" in a tone that said, "I understand, why didn't you say that in the first place?"

I thought of John Holt and things he wrote about how what we say to children, to help them, is often wrong or confusing. I'm glad Ellen could tell me I was wrong.

A Member of the Community

From a letter that Anne Brosnan (KY) wrote to Susannah Sheffer:

I really liked your review excerpt in GWS #91 ("Is Homeschooling Opposed to Community Life?"). Even though I've never read the book, I thought you made a good case for the defense of John Holt and for homeschoolers and the community. I liked your ending statement, "Simply knowing that a given family has turned to homeschooling does not tell us which set of attitudes they have or how those attitudes manifest themselves." You know, I've been thinking lately about things and I've decided that there really is no such thing as homeschooling! When I was younger, I always thought of myself as a homeschooler and was really proud of it and really involved with homeschooling (and in turn I hated school even though I didn't know anything about what school was like). Now as I've grown older I've realized some things: that school and traditionalist people who support school tend to put this homeschooling label on people (after all, there wouldn't be "homeschooling" if we didn't have "school," something to pull away from, to be the opposite of).

So much of the philosophy among people is, "Well, if you don't go to a public, private, or parochial school, what kind of school do you go to?" The answer we made up was "homeschool." As most homeschoolers do, I answered the usual round of questions and I enjoyed it, enjoyed publicizing homeschooling, myself, and my homeschooled life. But now as I've grown older, as I've gone out in the world (a little bit, at least), found my talent for what I consider to be my life's work, my profession, met more people, done more and seen more, something different has started happening. People outside my family no longer see me as a little kid who ought to be in school. Of course when I was 11 I looked like I was 16, and now that I'm 16 I constantly get mistaken for being over 21, but the point is I have noticed a mind change in people who see me and judge me in different situations. I'll walk into a store and people no longer look at me and think, "What is this little kid doing in here; she ought to be in school" (you can always tell what they think from the way they act). Now they look at me and see a regular customer. When I go out in the community now people seem to respond to me *as* a member of the community and not as a kid who has gotten lost from her parents. It makes me think, "Wow! This is a great feeling! I'm really being accepted as an adult, and I don't get asked why I'm not in school - I no longer have to explain homeschooling to everybody." I have kind of stopped thinking of myself as a homeschooler, but more as a member of the community, a working person, who just doesn't go to school and never did.

And then I realized - that's what I *always* was. I called myself a homeschooler just because it was a label I needed to get through the age when society looked at me as someone who ought to be in some type of school.

Learning German Together

Cheri Howard of California writes:

I am responding to a request made some issues back for information on families learning together. Our family has taken on the study of the German language as a family project. To learn a new language a person has to be pretty highly motivated, I think. Our motivation was to help out my husband, Evan, in his struggle with German. He is in a doctoral program where German is a requirement. He had passed his exam but found his knowledge of the language still too weak to serve his needs. He researched several German programs and concluded that to master the language he would need to use it in his day-to-day life. So our girls, Claire (9) and Terese (7), and I decided to drop Spanish and join him in German, making that our family's second language.

We began by checking into classes in our area. We are in an urban area and had several options, but found we would have to split up our family in these schools as we were all at different levels. We also found that these classes were expensive. Then we discovered that we could borrow "How to Learn German" videos from a German library, and as they were not copyrighted we could copy them and view them over and over. Though it meant we would need to buy a VCR, this method was still cheaper than sending just two of our family members to German class. So we bought a VCR and the workbooks and cassette tapes, borrowed the video tapes, and started learning German together.

We began with lessons in the evening but have since moved to breakfast time. We view the show (15 minutes) and then Evan and I do the cassette tape and workbook activities. Claire and Terese view the show with us but do not always stick around for the tape and workbook time. We view an episode three times, review a couple of old ones, of the girls' choice, and then go on to a new show. We seldom miss more than one or two mornings a week.

The videos are a good start, but to learn a language you need to speak it. So we've made an effort to include German in our daily life. This is perhaps the most valuable thing we do. We speak it at meals, while traveling in the car, and at other moments throughout the day. This is not to say that we are fluent. We say what we want to say, using as many German words as we can speak. Because Evan's German is so much better than the rest of ours, he often has to translate his German sentence into English when he finishes speaking.

I think the fact that Evan is somewhat knowledgeable in German has helped our program. He is a fellow student but also a teacher. When we have a question he often knows the answer or where to find it quickly. When the girls and I were studying Spanish, we were all in the same boat of ignorance. I feel it can help to have a guide who is a few steps ahead.

One issue we had to deal with was our strong dislike of TV. Buying a VCR was a big step for us. We have very little positive to say about TV, but we have found this VCR German program to be a good way for our family to learn. The good points are: (1) the chance to view the show over and over; (2) the ability to stop a show when needed; (3) the ability to schedule viewing as best fits our needs; (4) the visual and audio together enhance learning; (5) access

to knowledgeable teachers who would not otherwise be in our living room; (6) the natural appeal of the TV screen makes the sessions more eagerly attended by our girls.

A few other things we've done to learn German are: playing UNO in German, reading simple German books, putting up German charts and vocabulary, cooking German meals, making maps of Germany, and reading biographies of German historical figures.

Reading & Math

Ruth Matilsky (NJ) writes:

Our family is entering a new period of homeschooling. When we first realized we would homeschool, Sara was 4 and Jake was 1 and we were spending a year in the Boston area. We were lucky enough to be able to attend the open houses at GWS, and each month we would bring our questions to John Holt and he would take the time to answer them patiently.

My major concern then was the social life question. I had grown up being one of just a few Jews in my school and I always felt odd. I didn't want my children to grow up feeling like they were different from everybody else. I didn't want to homeschool in a vacuum. I never really was too concerned about the academic things. I remembered how much time I had wasted in school, and I had confidence that my children would learn.

Our philosophy was learned from John – provide the children with a stimulating environment, answer their questions, and they will be motivated to learn what they need to know to do what they want and need to do. We added to that by eliminating television from our home.

Sara is 13 now, Jacob is 10, and there are three others: Laura, almost 7, Matthew, almost 4, and Loren Isaac, five months. I've written at length in previous letters to GWS about the wonderful community we are part of. Homeschooling is not the only "different" thing we do. We are vegetarians who eat sea vegetables, we birth our children at home, and we use "alternative" medicine. In our community we are normal, but in a school setting our children would be challenged to fit in.

I've watched Sara become interested in origami and learn how to make just about anything by folding paper. Jacob knows how to use camera equipment that I will never use because I have a mental block about f-stops. Music has become an important part of our lives and the kids have spent hours learning musical scores. Laura is the closest one to a student in our family. She is reading now, but it's no spontaneous thing. For the past year and half she has demanded workbooks and on her own has spent long periods of time working in them. She is a real lesson to me. She truly enjoys the process in most things she does, and does not berate herself for learning slowly or for making mistakes. And when she excels in things she has no false modesty. "I'm the best," she'll say with a big smile.

I have felt, however, that as time went on there were some areas of learning that weren't going to just happen. For Sara this was math. For Jacob it was reading.

I told Sara that if she didn't know her multiplication tables by the time she was 12, she'd have to start learning them. She resisted this and it was hard, but I don't think there's any easy way to learn the tables except by drill – make it a game or whatever you want, but you have to just do it. For Jacob it was a game – he used to go to sleep at night memorizing the times tables. But Sara hated it.

I persevered and she did it and now she is working on math each day and catching on more and more quickly. So right now we are actually having a lot of academic stuff going on around here. What's really interesting is that Sara is actually making her own curriculum. She has gotten resigned to learning math, and comes down each morning and works in a workbook. She's gone through catalogs and picked out math books that sound like they would be fun to work in. When I talk to her about what she is really doing when she works out a problem, she is interested.

I "carried" and "borrowed" for years without ever understanding why I was doing what I was doing.

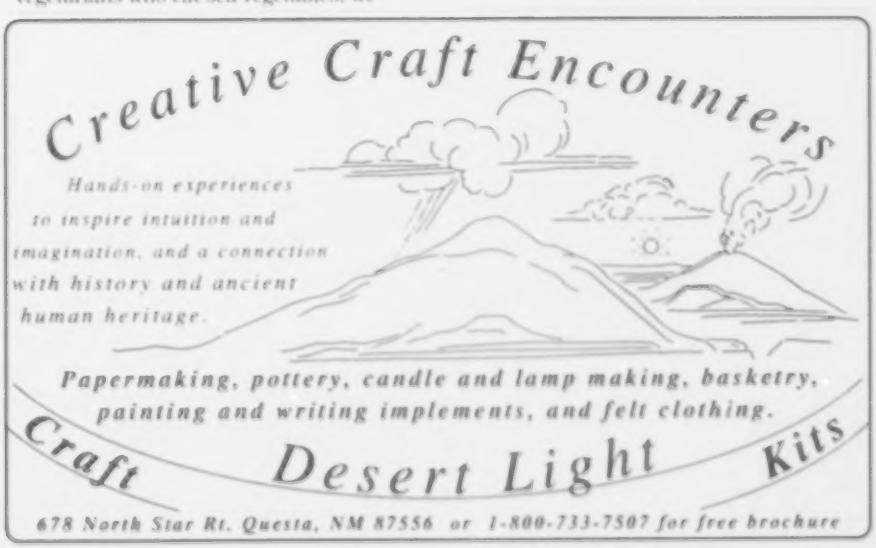
A friend of ours offered her a typing book and now Sara is learning to type. The time was right. Two years ago I got some typing books and they gathered dust until they were returned to the library.

We ordered *The Geography Coloring Book* from John Holt's Book and Music Store, and that has been a great success. And Sara's been keeping up a steady correspondence with two or three pen-pals, which I realize is a wonderful way to work on English composition. I've gotten a list of good books, and am encouraging her to pick out one or two each time we go to the library. While she hasn't been wild with excitement, she's humored me, and some of the books have turned out to be interesting. And she's writing reviews for me to read and correct the grammar. She's ready for that now. If I'd corrected grammar before, I think she might have been put off from writing, but right now she is open to that. I am impressed by how well she can write now. At her urging we are ordering grammar books.

I have read letters about homeschoolers who didn't start reading until they were 11, 12, or 13, but what I've been curious about is whether they worked on it at all before then. It seems to me that reading happens when one is familiar with words and letters. Jake wasn't spending any time looking at words and was wanting me to read to him constantly, which I just can't do with four other kids (including a newborn) to take care of. So a couple of months ago I said to him that he just had to start working at it. I've said that before and always ended up giving up because the resistance was so great, but this time he was more willing. We found a set of readers that he didn't find too ridiculous and I could see that in the last year he had actually improved a lot. It used to be that I would tell him what a word was and he couldn't remember it even if it appeared in the next sentence. Now he could remember and was even starting to sound things out.

After about a month of working on the easy readers, he got bored with them. Now we are reading *Calvin and Hobbes* together. The words are long, but there is quick gratification and we're both having fun doing this. Then a few nights ago I realized that he is not automatically realizing that "ph" has an "f" sound, so during the day we are doing a small amount of phonics. Too much would totally confuse him. I am searching for a linguistics book because he is irate about "ph" sounding like "f" and wants to know *why* there are all these silly things in the English language.

This week we had a project that involved reading. Jacob complained so much last week about the lentil soup I made for dinner that I told him this week he could make minestrone soup (far more work). To do this he had to learn to read the recipe and make a shopping list. I'm doing the same thing with Laura. Friday is now our baking day and I write out the recipe for her and she reads it.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Learning? Yes, of course. Education? No thanks.

Aaron Falbel ("A Conversation with Ivan Illich," GWS #86) writes:

In 1982, a British interviewer asked John Holt how he defined the word "education." He responded: "It's not a word I personally use. ... The word 'education' is a word much used, and different people mean different things by it. But on the whole, it seems to me what most people mean by 'education' has got some ideas built into it or contains certain assumptions, and one of them is that learning is an activity which is separate from the rest of life and done best of all when we are not doing anything else and best of all in places where nothing else is done - learning places, places especially constructed for learning. Another assumption is that education is a designed process in which some people do things to other people or get other people to do things which will presumably be for their own good. Education means that some A is doing something to somebody else B. I guess that, basically, is what most people understand education to be about."

The interviewer pressed John further: "Very well, but what is *your* definition?" John replied: "I don't know of any definition of it that would seem to me to be acceptable. I wrote a book called *Instead of Education*, and what I mean by this is instead of this designed process which is carried on in specially constructed places under various kinds of bribe and threat. I don't know what single word I'd put [in its place]. I would talk about a process in which we become more informed, intelligent, curious, competent, skillful, aware by our interaction with the world around us, because of the mainstream of life, so to speak. In other words, I learn a great deal, but I do it in the process of living, working, playing, being with friends. There is no division in my life between learning, work, play, etc. These things are all one. I don't have a word which I could easily put in the place of 'education,' unless it might be 'living.'"

I wrote the following statement at the request of Ivan Illich to try to explain the difference between learning and education. I realize that "education" is a difficult word to pin down - some people may use it in the way that I use the word "learning." But I believe John Holt is right in saying that most people use "education" to refer to some sort of *treatment*. (Even "self-education" can reflect this: a self-administered treatment.) It is this usage that I am contrasting with learning, and this idea of people needing treatment, whether carried out in schools or homes or wherever, that I wish to call into question.

Many people use the words "learning" and "education" more or less interchangeably. But a moment's reflection reveals that they are not at all the same. I invite you to take this moment and reflect with me on this idea.

Learning is like breathing. It is a natural, human activity; it is part of being alive. A person who is active, curious, who explores the world using all his or her senses, who meets life with energy and enthusiasm - as all babies do - is *learning*. Our ability to learn, like our ability to breathe, does not need to be improved or tampered with. It is utter nonsense, not to mention deeply insulting, to say that people need to be taught how to learn or how to think. We are born knowing how to do these things. All that is needed is an interesting, accessible, intelligible world, and a chance to play a meaningful part in it.

If the air is polluted, then it can become difficult to breathe. We cough, wheeze, and gasp for air. Similarly, if our social environment is polluted, it can become difficult to learn. Today, our social environment is thoroughly polluted by *education* - a designed process in which one group of people (educators, social engineers, people shapers) tries to make another group (those who are to be "educated") learn something, usually without their consent, because they (the educators) think it will be good for them. In other words, education is forced, seduced, or coerced learning - except that you can't really make another person learn something that he or she doesn't want to learn, which is why education doesn't work *and never has worked*. People have always learned things, but *education* is a relatively recent innovation, and a deeply destructive one at that.

It is ironic that education, carried out by well-meaning people hoping to produce or enhance learning, ends up attacking learning. But this is precisely what happens, despite all the good intentions. In the climate of education, learning is cut off and disembedded from active life. It is divorced from personal curiosity and is thus profoundly denatured. Learning shrivels as it becomes

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the result of a process controlled, manipulated, and governed by others. It deteriorates into empty actions done under the pressure of bribe and threat, greed and fear. We all know this to be true from our own "educational" experiences.

When I speak of education, I am not referring only to that which goes on in schools. Today education takes place in many guises and settings: through the mass media, in the workplace, and in the home. We adopt the *educative stance* when we feel it is our right and duty to manipulate others for their own good.

Let me be clear. I am not against all forms of teaching. It is a privilege and a joy to help someone do something he or she has freely chosen to do, provided that we are invited to help. I am against unasked-for, I'm-doing-this-for-your-own-good teaching.

I do have a problem with *professional* teachers - people who try to turn whatever knowledge they might have into capital, into a commodity. I want to live in a society where casual asked-for teaching is a matter of courtesy, not a quick way to make a buck. Sure, there are times when it is proper to compensate a teacher for his or her time and effort. But the new educational supermarkets, which offer courses (for a fee) on everything from breastfeeding to sensitivity training, are a step in the wrong direction. Though such courses are not compulsory, they end up convincing people that learning through living is inferior to instruction. Why learn to diaper a baby by watching Granny do it when you can receive "parental education" from a professional parental educator?

Most of us have forgotten what it was like to follow our own noses, to ask our own questions and find our own answers. Years of educational treatment have convinced us that learning is, and can only be, the result of teaching. We grow up into adults who insist that our children "receive" an education. We trust neither ourselves nor our children to learn.

The last thing I want to do is *improve* education; rather, I want to escape its noxious fumes, to offer my help to anyone seeking similar detoxification, and to clean up the environment where I can. If you are interested in joining me, there are some steps that you and I can take that will help clear the air of education and create a cleaner social environment supportive of learning.

First, let us rid our own minds of the prejudice that views others who opt out of educational treatments as "delinquents," "failures," or "dropouts." Let us view them instead as wise *refuseniks*, as conscientious objectors to a crippling and dehumanizing process. Let us act in a way that removes the stigma currently hanging over the heads of educational underconsumers.

Second, if we agree that children are good at learning, then let our attitude and dealings with young people bear this out. Let us resist the temptation to become educators, to rub the noses of the young in our greater experience by adopting the roles of teacher, helper, and instructor at the drop of a hat. Let us trust people to figure things out for themselves, *unless* they specifically ask for our help. (As it turns out, they ask frequently. Small children, whose curiosity has not been deadened by education, are usually brimming over with questions.) The nature of the toxicity inherent in education is precisely that so much of the teaching that goes on is unasked for. Let us endeavor to rid our own behavior of unasked-for help.

Third, let us not discriminate against the uncertified when it comes to matters of employment. Several landmark studies have shown that there is no correlation between educational training and performance on the job. (See especially Ivar Berg's *The Great Training Robbery*, Beacon Press, 1971.) If we must assess competence for a given job, let us assess it as directly as we can, and not conflate competence with length of sitting done in educational institutions. We can also deflate the value of educational currency by refusing to talk about our own educational credentials. Take them off your resumé! Demand that others judge you by your actual talents and accomplishments, as you would judge others.

Fourth, let us do our own part to create a more open and accessible society, where knowledge and tools are not locked up in institutions or hoarded as closely guarded secrets, by offering (not imposing) to share our skills with others. Take on an apprentice. Hang a shingle outside your home describing what you do. Let your friends and neighbors know that you are making such an offer to any serious and committed person.

Fifth, let us outlaw *exploitative* labor, not child labor, the prohibition of which currently denies many forms of meaningful participation to the young. This will help end the policy of age discrimination, which mandates that the young be taught *about* the world before they are allowed to learn *from* it by participating *in* it.

Sixth, let us support libraries, museums, theaters, and other voluntary, non-coercive community institutions. (Many libraries, for example, are only open during working hours, when only those with the luxury of a research stipend may use them. With more support, they could be open evenings and weekends.) Additionally, let us create more spaces in our communities where young and old (and those in between) can get together to pursue unprogrammed activities of all sorts: arts, crafts, sports, music, hobbies, discussion groups, etc. Let us end the policy of shunting young and old into separate institutions "for their own good."

Finally, think up more ideas of your own! As a society that has been addicted to education for several generations, we have lost the ability to imagine what it might be like to grow up and live in a world free of pedagogical manipulation.

If you agree with this statement, or just find it provocative, make copies and discuss it with your family, friends, neighbors, and fellow workers. Send a copy to distant friends and invite them to do the same.

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JOHN HOLT'S BOOK AND MUSIC STORE

Indian America: A Traveler's Companion

by Eagle/Walking Turtle #1686 $17.95 + post.

Although the Year of Columbus has sensitized many of us to the viewpoint of the native peoples of the Americas, Native American cultures have been a topic of curiosity and study for many people for a long time. *Indian America: A Traveler's Companion* will be a helpful addition to the library of anyone who is beginning or continuing a study of Native Americans.

Written by Eagle/Walking Turtle, an Irish/Choctaw artist and writer, this book is basically a travel guide to the remaining tribes or groups of Native Americans in the continental U.S., but it does much more as well. The author divides the country and thus the book into nine sections, each of which begins with a brief overview of the geography of the area and the typical lifestyle of the peoples who lived there. These introductions are not dry lists of facts, but are written in a style that echoes the cadences of the Native American storytellers and arises from a deep respect for the traditional Native American way of living.

Within each section the author lists the tribal groups and squeezes a good deal of information into each entry. The entry begins with the name of the group - Kialegee Tribal Town or Kiowa Business Committee, for example - and is followed by an address and phone number and then an explanation of the name of the tribe the group is associated with. Some of the entries end here, but most continue with up to five more sections. The first includes more details about the location, the next describes major festivals and celebrations and gives their general or specific dates and sometimes even includes reminders of how visitors should conduct themselves at a particular event. Then, the number of entries that included the next category, "Art Forms," was amazing. It appears that many of the tribes still produce traditional arts and crafts, and this section describes when and where you can purchase them if they are for sale. "Visitors' Information" covers "don't miss" aspects of a visit to the area, descriptions of a tribal museum, or the availability of camping, fishing, and such. All of these sections include personal reactions by the author, things that particularly impressed him or events he himself enjoys.

Many of the entries include a final section on the history of the tribe up to about 1900. Interspersed throughout the text are wonderful old photographs of members of different tribes. At the end of the book, Eagle/Walking Turtle includes a glossary, a calendar of events, and other useful information like a list of Indian-Owned/Operated Museums and Cultural Centers - not outsiders trying to exploit the Native American craftspeople or heritage, but Native Americans who are trying to support themselves and their families.

This book will be of great value to anyone who wants to experience Native American culture directly, either by means of a one-day outing to a nearby site or a weeks-long adventure across the United States. The importance of this face-to-face, actually-being-there kind of experience is probably obvious to most readers of GWS. But even if you are unable to travel, this book can still be the source of a good many projects. Instead of attending one of the many ceremonies described in the book, you could write or phone for more information about it or about the tribe in general. Perhaps you could use the addresses to find some pen-pals. Mapping the location of the tribes could teach you not only about the Native Americans but about the geography of the country. And it would be impossible to read the history of the individual tribes without getting a sense of the diversity and richness of their culture, religion, and family relationships. You also get a clear sense of what the white Europeans were disrupting and destroying.

My children, who are Quakers, like to tell the story of an experience a friend of theirs had. In a history class one day this friend's teacher was speaking at length about William Penn and the Quakers, and she mentioned at one point that they had died out. The boy stood up and said, "Wait a minute. I'm a Quaker and I'm still alive." Since this boy had a reputation as something of a troublemaker in school, the teacher told him that he must be mistaken and that he should sit down and pay attention. This kind of attitude can easily show up with regard to Native Americans, too. People who are not Native Americans tend to look at them as historical phenomena and forget that they are people living today, confronting the problems of the modern world. This book helps you round out your picture of Native Americans, adding to your knowledge of both the past and the present. — Madalene Axford Murphy

Kids for Sail

by Pamela and Sam Bendall #1690 $9.95 + post.

The Bendall family sold everything, bought a 40-foot sailboat, and spent the next year sailing the Pacific and stopping at islands along the way. *Kids for Sail* is the story of the adventure, and it's written in a style that is accessible to young readers but just as enthralling to older readers.

Nine-year-old Sam and his younger brother Charlie learn about sailing and navigation along with their parents. Their respect for their parents grows as they work together to survive terrible storms at sea, and Sam learns the satisfaction that comes from being a real help.

In the midst of his life at sea Sam also keeps up with his correspondence course (putting on a tie - but nothing else! - to get him in the mood), and he often complains about having to do schoolwork when everything else going on around him is so much more interesting. I couldn't help sympathizing; it's too

bad that even in the middle of so much exciting living Sam had to make a distinction between schoolwork and everything else he was learning. Yet it's clear that Sam followed a correspondence course because the family only planned to be away for a year and Sam was expected to re-enter school when he returned.

The family's adventures on land are as interesting as the ones they have at sea. They learn the nuances of cultural differences and how important it is not to assume that their own way of doing things is the only way.

Though this is a book that many kids would enjoy reading to themselves, it's also one that will likely inspire some good family discussions if read aloud together. Maybe it will even inspire families to take to the sea! — Susannah Sheffer

The Dancing Puppet Theatre

by Doreen D'Eath #1662 $12 + post.

The Dancing Puppet Theatre really made me want to make puppets, which I had never been very interested in before. My children were ready to start as soon as they saw the book. Helen and Greta asked me to read some of the book to them. They loved it and spent a long time in an incredible burst of creativity. They must have made more than twenty puppets. I joined them and we did a very funny puppet play together.

I have found that it can be fun to discuss, using puppets, some issues that I'm uncomfortable with otherwise, even if I feel that the discussion is important. Puppets give us just enough distance to allow us to communicate our feelings honestly - and sometimes it's easier to hear things clearly through the ears of a puppet. Communication is so basic, and can be so difficult, that I think it's great to find new ways to explore our relationships (and ourselves).

In fact, one of the basic important ideas of this book is that puppetry is a means of communication. The other basic ideas are that we can all be aware and creative, and that movement is essential to puppetry.

Doreen D'Eath really respects children's creative impulses and is very clear that adult help is generally not necessary. There are lots of neat ideas in the book about materials and types of puppets. D'Eath emphasizes, though, that this is all just a jumping-off point; nearly every idea for a puppet is a good idea. Sometimes a child may need a little help with a specific problem, like how to keep up a floppy puppet, but generally every puppet-maker will do fine without input from anyone else. The author really tries to help us be free enough to create.

The title, *Dancing Puppet Theatre*, is significant. To do a satisfying puppet play, we need to keep our puppets moving. Movement is often the main way we can communicate using puppets. Dialogue is OK, too, but is often best used sparingly. Puppetry is a special kind of storytelling or discussion. There's such a great potential to dramatize everything by having our puppets move in a whole range of ways, from subtle to exaggerated.

For families who are not familiar with puppeteering, this book can be a real inspiration. For those who do puppets already, it can help with some of the more complicated ones, such as rod puppets and marionettes.

The book itself is well thought out. It is spiral bound so it stays open where you want it to. Most of the illustrations are wonderful drawings by children of various ages. The whole book is clearly and sensibly organized.

The second part of the book introduces us to many kinds of puppets - stick, finger, tube, paper bag, and junk puppets; also shadow and rod puppets and marionettes made from various materials. The third part of the book focuses on the basics of performance and the play. There are some useful ideas for dealing with difficult situations - lack of materials, improvising a stage, resolving conflicts, etc.

The first part of the book, "Laying the Groundwork," is very special. D'Eath goes into "Materials from Within" (the starting point for anything that has any real meaning); Tools (a strong sense of nature and ritual); "Identifying with Nature"; and "Materials from Outside" (which will become puppets). D'Eath emphasizes that anything can be a puppet, but she encourages using only non-toxic and environmentally sound materials.

I have two minor concerns about the book. Twice the author suggests praising children's puppets. I think praise is harmful (though responding with enthusiasm is fine if and when we feel it). But she doesn't hammer away at this, and her basic attitude is respectful and enthusiastic. Then, she seems to assume that all people puppets will be painted white. However, her whole tone emphasizes doing things the way that seems best to the puppet-maker, so this does not have to be a significant problem.

Puppetry is such a multi-faceted craft, involving personal awareness, making the puppets, putting together a story, acting out the story or dialogue, and communicating with others (other puppeteers and possibly and audience). It's great fun, and *The Dancing Puppet Theatre* can help us connect with some of the very special creativity and feelings that are within all of us. Make a puppet - learn and enjoy! — Mary Van Doren

Oh Scrud! #1700 $6.95 + post.

It is difficult to find a word game that is challenging and fun for everyone involved, but *Oh Scrud!* is just that. The game uses a card game format in which players are dealt out seven cards with letters on them. Once someone says "Go!", everyone begins form-ing words and laying them down, drawing and discarding cards as they go. The first person to spell out three words and lay them down is the winner of the round. Rounds usually take about five minutes.

After playing a round or two you'll probably discover that older players are always winning. It's time to start handicapping them. For example, you can make it illegal for older players to use three letter words, or say that older players must lay down four words to win or one six letter word. You can change the game in whatever way works for you. This makes it more challenging for the older players and gives the younger players a fair chance.

Another nice thing about *Oh Scrud!* is its fast pace. Unlike

the old standby, *Scrabble*, which can last for hours, you can play a round of *Oh Scrud!* in five minutes. The wild cards and special instruction cards also add to the liveliness and excitement of the game. Also, you don't take turns in *Oh Scrud!* The minute you start, everyone is on their own, racing to spell out words and lay them down. No more waiting while those slower players take their turns.

You may notice that I haven't said anything yet about the educational benefits of *Oh Scrud!* That's because I think that it's more important that kids have fun first. *Oh Scrud!* is definitely a fun, worthwhile game, that just happens to be educational. It's good spelling practice, and helps develop a strong vocabulary. Kids who are tired of weekly spelling tests might find *Oh Scrud!* a welcome alternative, but please don't use *Oh Scrud!* as spelling practice. Just play it and enjoy learning while you do. — Mika Perrine

The Book of Classic Board Games

by Klutz Press #1660 $17.95

I knew we were in trouble when I couldn't find the book.

"Have you seen the board game book?" I asked Lauren, our 6 year old.

"Momma's got it." she replied.

I went downstairs and saw Day huddled over a game of Solitaire, her favorite challenge.

"Can I have the book when you're done?"

Day looked up from her game and smiled. "Sure," she said, "but I'm not sure when I'll be done. Can you do something else while I play?"

There is always "something else" to be done in a house with three children living in it, but being someone who enjoys a good board game I knew that "something else" meant allowing Day at least another hour to play.

Like other Klutz titles we sell (*Country and Blues Harmonica, Explorabook*), this book is a fine example of clever packaging, excellent research, and clear, light-hearted writing. Attached to the spiral binding are two pouches with zippers, which hold the black and white playing pieces (polished "stones" that are flat on the bottom, rounded at the top) and dice. The book is made of very sturdy cardboard and the game boards are printed in vibrant colors, with their directions written on the facing pages. Nearly all the directions fill but one page, most even less. The instructions for Go and Backgammon take up three pages, but this is because they discuss strategy and tactics as well.

We gave this book to my father-in-law, another game lover, for Christmas. When we spoke with him he gushed about how much he enjoyed reading the book. For him, the best part was reading the game histories, which are provided before the rules for each game. Nine Men's Morris, for instance, is the oldest game in the book. The editors note, "The first board ever discovered was carved by workmen into a temple under construction in ancient Egypt. Later on, the game found its way into the Talmud, King Alfonsos's 13th century *Book of Games* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Over the years, and throughout the world, Nine Men's Morris has been a 'fad' countless times. If ever there were an all-time classic board game, this would have to be it."

According to the editors, the two criteria for selecting "the fifteen best board games ever invented" are that they had to have a track record, in other words they needed to have millions of fans over time, and they had to score 9 or better on a scale of 1 - 10 on their "Fun Quotient." I think the editors did an excellent job on both counts.

While it is ideally suited for portability, such as taking on a picnic, beach trip, or vacation, you'd be hard pressed to play any of these in a moving vehicle because the "stones" slip across the laminated cardboard. However the convenience of having 15 well-chosen board games readily at hand, most of which have rules that can be learned in under 10 minutes, is not to be underestimated.

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Just last week, Lauren wanted to do something with me at the office since there were no other kids for her to play with. Our solution was to take this book off the shelf and have a good game of Checkers.

At the beginning of the book is a list of the games, with suggested age ranges, number of players, a measure of how complicated the rules are, and a brief description of each game. The youngest suggested age is 5, which is for Checkers, though you and your children are the best judges for this; my 3 1/2 year old is trying to learn Checkers! The little playing pieces are definitely bite-size, so you wouldn't want a child who sticks things in her mouth to have access to them. After reading the list of games, and browsing through the colorful pages you will definitely want to play something. How about the African game Mancala? Or a favorite game of Queen Victoria's when she was a child, Dalmation Pirates and the Volga Bulgars? The other games I haven't mentioned that are in this book are: Cats and Dogs, Roundabouts, Brax, Hasami Shogi, Hoppers, Hex, 3-D Tic-Tac-Toe, and Fandango. The wide-ranging selection of games from around the world makes this book a nice complement to one's interest in history, geography, or social studies, but the best reason for buying and using this book is that it contains so much FUN in such a neat little package.

— Pat Farenga

Anchor Math

by Leslie Hart #1656 $16.95 + post.

Few parents are puzzled about how to introduce reading to their children: they simply read to them as often as possible. But parents often tend even at the beginning stages to reach desperately for a textbook in mathematics, or to avoid the subject entirely, perhaps from their own experience of math as a school subject that was boring or hard or something they were not good at. We all need to be reminded that mathematics is a language just as surely as the English we read and speak to our children is, and math is a means of communication we use every day, even if we are not astrophysicists or statisticians. *Anchor Math*, by Leslie Hart, reminds us of this very clearly and provides specific ways to pass this language along to our children.

Too often, mathematics appears dull or difficult because computation becomes an end in itself, as if it were the entirety of the subject instead of just a skill that helps you do and understand the real stuff. And, as it was traditionally presented in schools, computation had little to do with real life, aside from a few word problems thrown in to puzzle and confuse students used to dealing only with what Hart calls naked numbers. Hart believes firmly that math from the very beginning should be anchored in real life.

Anchor Math is not a textbook. You will find no pages of problems to do here. Instead it lays out, informally but clearly, how to introduce the world of math to a child. I wish I had had this book when my children were younger and I was searching for real-life math experiences for them. Of course I could come up with easy examples: "Three friends will be eating supper with us tonight. How many plates will you need for the table, Clare?" But there were times when my creativity ebbed and it would have been nice to have had some other ideas to rely on - particularly in areas other than computation - and to be reminded of all the areas of math that kids need access to - like latitude and longitude, amps, volts, and Btus.

Hart talks about introducing the n-ness of a number (the threeness of three, the fourness of four), of helping a child climb inside a number and really get to know it just the way she gets to know the concept of dog by perhaps first connecting it to the family dog or a neighbor's dog and then applying it to a stuffed animal. When it comes to numbers, this idea involves a lot more than just teaching a child to count from one to ten or asking him how many cows are in a field. When you connect 3 with a tricycle and a three-legged stool, you introduce an aspect of stability, for example, that 2 doesn't have.

Hart underscores the fact that math presented as lessons with a "learn this now!" attitude doesn't work as well as math presented as experience over a long period of time so that the brain can begin to see and understand the patterns for itself.

This is a book written for teachers, however, and homeschoolers will, as usual, have to ignore some of the aspects that apply only to classrooms, or adjust the suggestions to your own situations. One of the things I like about open-ended books like this that present ideas and suggestions is that the ideas often spark my own ideas at those times when I need a jump-start for my creativity.

Hart believes that even subjects like fractions that were traditionally not introduced until the later grades can be introduced earlier if they are anchored in real life. Even the often confusing concept of percents becomes easier when he connects "per" with a child's experience of apples at 89¢ per pound and "cent" with a word like "century" and then explains that "per cent" means "for each hundred."

But *Anchor Math* does not deal with higher math topics. It does not provide any easy strategies for dealing with algebra or trigonometry. As a matter of fact, I disagree with the one comment Hart does make about the subject: "At the higher levels of math, reached by only a handful of high school students, there does seem to arise a need for what we call 'talent'; an individual flair and aptitude. But at routine levels, we should assume that the great majority of students can prosper." It seems to me that a child who has a deep enjoyment of mathematics and who understands the vital role it plays in so many aspects of our lives may be interested in pursuing it into the higher levels. Without this enjoyment and understanding that a book like this one can foster, no amount of "talent" (an undefined term at best) is going to help. — Madalene Axford Murphy

GWS Back Issues and Index

Back Issues: We strongly urge you to get the back issues of GWS, especially if you plan to begin homeschooling. Rates: $135 for a complete set. For any other combination of back issues, mailed at one time to one address, the cost is $2 each plus $2 per order.

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FOCUS: Evaluation vs. Feedback

How is evaluation different from feedback? What kind of feedback is most helpful? Young GWS readers answer these questions in the writings below.

Accepting Different Ideas

From Dillon Wright Fitzgerald (PA):

Feedback has always been very important to me, and I think that getting feedback on what I do helps me a lot more than getting grades would. To give helpful feedback, the person giving it needs to be honest. They need to tell me honestly how they think I'm doing on some activity or project and how I could improve. They shouldn't be afraid of hurting my feelings if I'm not doing too well. Then I can decide whether to take their advice or not. In some instances, I have to take their advice; for example, if my violin teacher tells me that I need to play faster in some section of a piece, I should play that fast if I want to play as well as possible. On the other hand, if I was painting a picture and one of my parents told me to change the colors in it, I might not want to take their suggestion. I might just want to go my own way.

It's important to accept that people have different opinions and ideas. If I asked my mother how I could improve a project, I might find that her ideas were extremely different from mine. I might disagree with her opinion and ask someone else or go back to my original plan. I shouldn't force myself to accept her ideas, thinking that they're better than mine.

Sometimes I can get useful feedback without relying on someone else. For example, when practicing my violin, it's very helpful for me to listen to a tape of a professional violinst playing my piece, so I can judge how well I'm doing and what parts can be improved. Then I go back to the parts that need improvement and play them over and over again until they sound right.

If a parent sat down with me and gave me feedback on a project, I'm sure I would appreciate it. It's important for people to do that: give me feedback even if I don't ask for it. Of course, it's also important for them to give me feedback when I specifically do ask for it. Sometimes I feel a need to hear feedback on what I do, and I appreciate it when someone takes the time to sit down with me, telling me their thoughts.

Tell What Was Wrong *and* What Was Right

From Mona Weiner (NY):

When I get feedback, it is usually just my mom or dad explaining what I did right or wrong - like on stories I write, my mom will point out things that could be changed, or words that I spelled wrong. I like feedback like that because I can see what was wrong and what I can do to change it next time. I *don't* like feedback where the person just tells me what I did wrong. It's OK when people tell me two things: what was wrong, and what was right. For example, a person will observe my ice skating and explain that I should hold my arms more gracefully, and then it would be just perfect, because I was doing everything right except for that.

Recently my brother Isaac and I were at the ice skating rink, and whenever Isaac went to the middle of the rink where the figure skaters were practicing, a man tried to help him. Isaac was working on cross-overs, and the man would come up and tell him that he was doing it wrong and that he should do it this way, not that way. So Isaac got really discouraged; he didn't go to the center of the rink because the man would always come up to him. I found him sitting on the bench with my mother, and I went up to him and said, "What's wrong?" He told me the story. I said to him, "Ike, just tell the guy that you don't want any help." I got Isaac to go up to the man and say, "I'm sorry, sir, but when I want your help I'll ask for it." He told him that and the man left him alone.

When I was younger, like 7 or 8, I really wanted to be graded "like the kids from school." I told this to my mother and she smiled and said, "OK, I'll make you a report card." So she did, and she gave me all A's. I was really mad, because I knew that the kids in school didn't get all A's. After that I made my parents put grades on whatever papers I did.

I don't want to be graded anymore, but when I hear my friends saying things like, "Hey, Vince, how did you make out on that history test?" and the other person says, "I got 100!", I catch myself thinking, I wish I got 100 on my history test. But I never have to worry about passing, or my mom and dad getting mad because I got an F. And I love the reaction I get when I tell kids that I never get grades. They say, "Oh, wow, that's so cool! You're so lucky!"

Sometimes I give myself feedback. I compliment myself on the pillow I've just sewn, or the soccer goal I've just kicked, or the basket I've just made. When I give myself feedback, it helps me feel encouraged and to put more into what I'm doing.

Direct in a Positive Way

From Andrea Quarracino of Pennsylvania:

When I get feedback from my parents, teachers, friends, etc., I usually find it more helpful if they are direct in a positive way. I prefer it when people are blunt and say exactly what they think

about my work, as long as they are polite in doing so.

In my opinion, there are two very unhelpful types of feedback. One is when people say, "That was very nice," and are not very specific about what they liked, what they did not like, and so forth. The other is when people are extremely rude about expressing their opinion. For example, hearing, "That story stunk. I hate your writing style," would definitely not be as helpful as, "I think you might want to work on this story a little more, and you could try it with a different writing style, too."

Grades such as A- and B+ would not be helpful to me at all. In schools, the teachers have a system that works very nicely. They can tell the kids what they think of their work without really expressing their opinion. As you can tell, I really hate the thought of grades! To me, grades belong on eggs, meat, milk, etc., not on the work of people!

I think if teachers tried a different method of giving feedback, it would be more helpful to the children they are teaching. If, instead of writing B+ on a paper, teachers would write something like, "Good writing style, but not clear in the middle of the second paragraph," the students would feel good about their work and know specifically what was unclear to another reader. I know if I were a student in those circumstances, I would definitely prefer to hear positive feedback instead of grades.

Likes to Know How to Improve

From Nathan Westheimer (OH):

I like it when, in basketball, my coach tells me what I can do better, what I did wrong, and how I can stop it. I think about it for a moment and then the next time I try to do better. Each time I play I get better and better.

When I play the saxophone I like it when my dad tells me when I hit a note that "doesn't work" in the song we're playing. I often improvise, so it's important that I stay in the same key. Sometimes I hit a note that sounds good to me but that doesn't sound good to my dad. So I weave it in with the other notes and it ends up sounding great! Sometimes I agree that the note doesn't sound good and I leave it out.

I was having a conversation with my dad the other day about achievement tests. My dad says that he doesn't like the tests. I'd like them if they would say what I did wrong so I could learn which things I could work harder on.

I like feedback without the As and A plusses and everything else. I like it when people tell me things that I did wrong, and what I did right, especially when they respect my right to disagree. Some people that give me feedback, I give them feedback too. That's why nobody is perfect.

Grades Make People Feel Judged

From Hannah Lash (NY):

There are times when evaluation can be useful and helpful, but there are certainly more times when feedback is better. The biggest problem with grades is that they can make a person feel judged, because all they tell is whether or not what you have done is good by someone else's standards. Also, grades probably make people more competitive, and that's not so good.

My experience with getting grades comes from taking a national achievement test, which I used to do every year. I only feel happy getting a grade when it is a good one. If I don't do so well and get a bad grade, then I end up feeling bad about myself and feel as though I'm stupid. So that doesn't help much. All a grade does is tell you whether or not you have done something wrong, not why it has gone wrong or how you might fix it.

I take piano lessons, and I love to play the piano. I think one of the reasons I like my lessons is that my teacher is so helpful and positive. When I play a song, she always tells me the good things I have done. Then she will often help me see what more I can do with technique and dynamics that will make the song even better. I never feel bad during my lessons, or as though I can't do what my teacher asks me to do, because she is so encouraging. For me, that is the best kind of feedback.

I also like to know how friends respond to my writing, especially my stories and poems. It helps me to know that they like what I have written, and what it is they like, and what things I may change to make the writing better or clearer. Last year I submitted two poems to a poetry contest. One of them was selected as a winner. The contest committee sent back the other poem without any comment, and I have wondered and wondered since then why they chose the one they did, because I don't think one was necessarily better than the other.

There are times when I don't feel in any need of feedback at all. My sister and I formed a Peace Club with three other friends in 1989, and since then we have raised a lot of money and donated it to various charitable and environmental organizations. We sell crafts and jewelry that we make, and then we decide which organization to donate to. Originally we learned about organizations like Oxfam International because my mother periodically gets mailings from them. Now I get mailings myself. Recently we picked up a paper that was about what we could do for Somalia, and we decided that that was most pressing because that has concerned us for some time.

When we do our Peace Club work we don't need feedback, because we feel fine about what we choose to do. I don't need feedback when I do chores, either, because I can see for myself when I have done a good job. Feedback is most useful to me when I am doing something for others, not when I am doing something just for myself. I like to build things, and if my project is going fine, I don't really want someone to come and tell me how I could do it better or what I might have done wrong. But if I know I need help, or if I'm stuck on a problem, then feedback is important.

No Insincere Praise

From Erin Simonitch (CA):

If I'm writing something and I ask someone a specific question, I mean just that and nothing else. But if I say "Please edit this," I mean that I want the adult to tell me anything that's wrong - spelling, weird mistakes, and all-around improvements that can be made. I don't mind criticism as long as it's not insulting.

One of my ballet teachers has several praises that she uses. One is "Not bad." She doesn't say "Terrible!" at all, so I guess "not bad" is a version of that. This is an example of insincere praise. I don't think any child likes it.

Another thing she says is "Much better!" This is one of my favorite praises, because it means that my hard work has paid

off. Pretty soon she'll tell me "Very good!"

If I'm new at something, hearing "That's OK - you're a beginner" doesn't help me at all. I know that I need to work on the skill, and I need someone to show me what I did wrong. Basically, I think most people want sincere input, but no condescending condolences or insincere praise.

Grades Don't Tell How to Improve

From Alex Moody (MA):

I dislike the school form of evaluation of a student's ability. Evaluation in the form of grades, tests, and report cards lacks the constructive criticism you need to improve, and instead it makes the students nervous when they get something wrong, like they can never fix the mistake. While I was in school, I would occasionally receive a grade that was not what I had expected. To find out what I needed to improve, I had to ask the teacher what she had been looking for. Frequently I would not receive an answer.

Evaluation is helpful because it tells someone how they are doing in a certain subject, overall, yet it is bad because it does not assist the student's growth and improvement. This year, one of my friends received a B on his report card. When he reviewed his tests he found that adding all his grades would normally equal an A-. When he asked the teacher about it, she told him that he must be mistaken, and she pursued it no further. It turned out that his effort and conduct in class brought his overall grade down. Grades frequently do not reflect the work that the student has done, but have included in them the teacher's feelings about that student. In this case, feedback would have told the student that he needed to work harder and disrupt the class less, making it easier on everyone.

When someone needs improvement in a specific area, it should be explained exactly what is wrong and how to improve it. That is feedback. For instance, getting an A- in a class tells the student that he or she has done well overall, no matter if at one point in the class the student got an F on a test. In a situation like that, feedback would have told the student what area he or she needed to improve, which could change the direction of his or her further studies.

Feedback also has its drawbacks. Many people will not tell their true feelings about problems they see, because they think it will hurt your feelings or make you mad at them. When asking for feedback, you should always let the person know that you want their honest opinion but that you might not use it. Many times in the past I have asked one of my friends what he thought of a paper I wrote, and he would tell me it was great, but when I asked another friend what he thought, the answer would be entirely different.

Feedback can come from a friend, a teacher, even yourself. The feedback I like to receive must be critical but not brutal. It has to come from someone I trust will tell me their true opinion, not just what I want to hear. Feedback is also effective if you criticize your own work, acting as a second party, but for most people, including me, this is hard.

Feedback and evaluation each have their pros and cons, yet they are both helpful in their own way, and they would be more so if they were used together, to complement each other.

Values Feedback When She Loves the Activity

From Lorie Broumand of Washington:

When doing things I especially love, getting helpful feedback can be very important - particularly if there is a set way in which to do something. For example, with art, the things I like to draw best are usually unrealistic, odd beings, faces or landscapes. But in the past two years or so, I've become increasingly interested in drawing from photographs. I have very little technical knowledge of art, and I had quite a time trying to make things look real. Suddenly, I became extremely determined to make what I drew look like the photo I was copying. I'd draw the same person over and over, then analyze every aspect, asking myself, "Now, how come this hardly looks a thing like the photograph?" Frequently, I'd ask my mom or my pen-pal Crystal to help point out what was wrong. This helped me to become aware of things I'd overlooked. My ability to create likeness improved bit by bit, though it's still something I have quite a hard time doing.

The feedback that I got from people was very important since I love art so much. Had it been housecleaning, and I was dusting wrong, I'm sure I couldn't have cared less! It's also much easier for me to make use of good suggestions when I can see my goal clearly - like trying to make my drawing look like the photo. If I were drawing unrealistically from my head and someone pointed out something as being incorrect, it would be harder for me to see it as a good suggestion because there is no crisp right and wrong to that.

The same thing is true with my flute playing. There is a certain technique that you need to follow. When I started playing last August, it was baffling to me that you actually had to *learn* how to just produce a sound. (Because I was used to the organ, that was quite a new thing for me.) Once I grasped how to blow properly, I still had the tone to work on. My teacher, rather a perfectionist, was never satisfied with an "OK" sound, and when I was ready to go on to new, more difficult exercises, she'd make me slow down and work on the tone only.

Here I could tell that my tone was not perfect, and I could also tell when I got it right. But I was willing to just let it go, expecting to get it in time. Since my teacher was so adamant about it, however, I took her advice and began to focus on that aspect of my playing a lot more. I increased my practice time greatly and worked diligently on the tone and the difficult high notes. This helped my playing immensely. If it hadn't been for my teacher giving me the feedback I needed, I wouldn't have realized on my own how important it was to stop and get the tone right.

Customers Provide Feedback

From Gabriel Westheimer (OH):

In our plant business, when we have a bad-looking plant, the feedback we get is that customers choose to buy the healthier-looking plants rather than the weaker ones. The next time when I go to sell, what I try to do is pick out the healthy ones so the customers come back and I have a better reputation. I try to find out what the problem was with the plants that did not look so healthy, so that the next year I can try to prevent the problem from happening again.

When I was taking my SCUBA diving classes, I received much feedback from my instructors and myself. In the first week, even though I was not used to textbooks I kept up with the other adults and kids in the class. But then in the third week, I got bad feedback because I did not study hard enough for that class. When I finally got to the last class, I was not prepared enough for the test. I missed passing the test by two points. After I found out that I flunked, one of the instructors took me aside and helped me find out what my mistakes were and how to get the right answers. As a result of flunking the test, I never got certified to go SCUBA diving by myself. I learned from the feedback that I have to study harder and be more attentive.

Feedback Necessary for Progress

From Jamie Smith (MD):

A lot of the activities I've been involved in need feedback in order for me to progress. Ice skating is a good example, because it's a combination of sport and art. When I work on jumps it's important for my coach to tell me how to fix problems so that I land properly. If I'm not corrected early, I get bad habits that can take months to work out. The artistic side of skating comes in the footwork and arm movements in the skating program, and performing them well can make a real difference. Although my coaches try to make that part look nice, it really is up to me to put life into a program. I have one of my parents videotape me, and then I watch for mistakes and places for improvement. I also watch all the skating competitions and when I see something I like, I incorporate it into my program.

I'm also in an art class, and art really requires feedback. When I'm working on a picture, I have to go to the teacher many times until I get the part I'm drawing the way I want it. What I like about my teacher's feedback is that I have the final word about the colors I want to use, and I have the option of changing things from the painting I'm copying. Also, if I don't agree with something she's told me to do, we can usually work out a compromise. It's not generally like that in school, where you do what you're told or else. I also wouldn't like getting graded without being told why I got a certain grade or how I can improve.

Some Coaches are Helpful

From Cristie Boone (CA):

My most vivid experience with evaluation and feedback came while I was doing synchronized swimming. We got evaluated when the judges scored our swimming at a meet. When we competed, each of us had our own view of how we did while swimming. When the judges produced their scores we either felt good or bad, depending on whether the scores were higher or lower than we expected. If they were just right, the overall feeling was happy.

We got feedback from the coaches when we were just practicing at our home pool. They don't score at practice, they give suggestions on how to get better. However, there are different personalities in the different coaches, some being positive and some being negative. Also, specific corrections were easier to fix than broader suggestions. When I was 13, I had two coaches: Betty and Laurie. Betty (she was mostly why I quit swimming) tended to be more negative. Laurie, on the other hand, was more positive. For example, Laurie would say something along the lines of, "You've done a good job and you look a lot better. Now, in this section, you would look even better if you did this." Betty, however, would be more likely to say something like, "You looked totally awful and you'd better get quicker or you'll have to swim it all the way through three times." The other thing is that Laurie knew we were trying really hard to get it right and would admit that. Betty never thought that we were trying our hardest unless we looked completely perfect. And that didn't happen very often.

I felt more inclined to do a good job for Laurie than I did for Betty. I viewed Laurie more as a friend and Betty as an authoritative figure who dealt out the punishment. My main coach from the year before was Laura. Now *she* was a wonderful coach. Everybody treated her as a friend, she was very easy to talk to, and she would smile and laugh a lot. It was a lot easier to take corrections from Laura because she always said them in a positive way.

I also noticed the difference between these coaches in competitions. If we swam well, no matter who the coach was, she would be happy about it. But if we didn't swim too well there was a major difference. A good coach like Laura would not act like it was the end of the world, and would tell us not to worry about it too much. Same thing with Laurie. Betty, however, tended to walk around with a scowl on her face and be in a very bad mood for a few days.

I don't think learning is interesting if it is one way. It helps to discuss things and get other people's ideas.

I think specific feedback is much more useful than general feedback is. And if it is positive, then the finished product turns out better. If the feedback is negative, then it's not quite as good at the end.

Evaluation, on the other hand, doesn't tell you all you need to know. For example, an evaluation might say, "Good, but you need to work harder" instead of "Good job, however on this certain part right here I think...". There are definitely ways to comment on how to fix something in a positive, considerate manner, showing whoever it is that you like the work they've done and that there are only a couple of things that can be slightly better.

A Chance to Decide for Yourself

From Rebecca Merrion (IN):

I think that feedback is important in learning just like it is in a conversation. If you have a conversation with a brick wall, or a person who just says "yeah" all the time, it isn't a very interesting conversation. So, applying that to learning, I don't think that learning is as interesting if it is one way. I think that it helps to discuss things and get other people's ideas.

I talk back and forth with my parents about subjects and issues all the time. We sit around a lot and discuss things. This helps more than just being given a sheet of paper and told to write down comments and then being given a grade.

When I wrote a chapter for Grace Llewellyn's new book *Real Lives*, getting her comments on the first draft helped me to know how to write the rest of it and how to make changes. When Grace said "I need more on this" or "this part is confusing," I would go back and look at it and I'd understand *why* she needed more, and that helped me to know how to make my writing better. This was kind of a side effect because she wasn't putting out the book so that I could learn to write better, but I ended up learning that anyway.

When I work on my algebra book, if I don't understand

something, I look up the answer and then figure out how I could think about the problem in a different way so that I could get that answer. Also, my parents show me different ways to do the problems when I get stuck. What matters to me is how well I understand it, not whether I get a good grade, because you can get a good grade and not understand what you're doing. My brother is a good example. He went back to school and took algebra, and could work some of the problems so he'd get an OK grade, but he didn't really understand it.

I think that feedback is much more important than grades are, because grades tell you what someone else thinks and not why they think it. With grades you don't get any feedback, so unless a teacher writes notes on your paper you don't know why she gave you the grade she did.

Sometimes I can give myself feedback. When I paint a picture, I compare it to other people's pictures to see if I need to add a little more shading or more color to what I've done. Just from looking at other people's work, I can get an idea of what I need to do. I think a lot of kids could do this, but teachers don't give them a chance to compare their work to someone else's and decide for themselves what they need to do. The teachers just jump in with their opinions.

Feedback Needs to Be Specific

From Anna Edmondson (ME):

At the ballet school I go to, we get a grade sheet two times a year. We are graded for the different aspects of the class, and our teachers sometimes write helpful notes beside the grades and on the back of the paper so we know where we most need to improve. However, the most helpful feedback I get is in the classes when our teachers correct and encourage us, showing us the way it should be done and then helping us to do it. I think the evaluation sheets are mostly for the parents.

In music, also (especially singing), it helps to have someone watch and listen to me and tell me what they thought of it. In my music lessons with my mother, she can point out where I am speeding up or slowing down too much. I sometimes don't realize that I'm doing that.

Also, I like the feedback that my parents give when they read my stories, because it shows me whether someone who doesn't have the storyline mapped out in their head can follow what's happening and not get left behind. They also tell me if a certain part seems too long or when something is hard to understand or believe. I also enjoy drawing, which both I and my parents critique, pointing out what I could change on my next one and what looks good.

Then there is not-so-helpful feedback – for example, when the director of one of the plays I was in got up to give us notes and finished with, "Last night was terrible; let's do better today." Nobody needs feedback like that! It makes me feel good when I've finished a performance of any kind and not only do people clap but they come up to me afterwards and say how much they enjoyed it.

Feedback needs to be specific, not just someone's general opinion. Constructive feedback is very helpful and without it I couldn't improve in the things I do.

Corrections Without Put-Downs

From Joseph Edmondson (ME):

I have mixed feelings about evaluation vs. feedback. Good feedback is usually best, but it really depends on the situation and the people involved.

I am a very serious ballet dancer. I take classes six days a week, with three different teachers. One teacher gives a very easy class, compliments people a lot, and once in a while corrects people. Even though she doesn't correct you very much, you pay more attention because you enjoy her classes. When her class ends, you leave with a feeling of self-worth and accomplishment.

My second teacher is a bit more strict and gives much more feedback. She is probably the best of all three because she corrects a lot, and she can correct without putting someone down.

My third teacher is an example of someone who gives bad feedback. He notices more things than any of the other teachers, but he corrects them in such a way as to make the students feel like they can't do anything. His favorite saying is, "That was horrible," but because he notices so many things, it is helpful to take classes with him, as long as you space them out a bit so you can regain some confidence before you try again. If you were to take only his classes you would soon drop out, because you would get the feeling that you couldn't do anything!

I also play the piano, and it is very encouraging to hear positive feedback from people who hear me practicing. The library we go to has a room with a piano in it, so we can reserve time to use it, and sometimes people stick their heads in the door and say how well I play, or ask how long I have been playing. An example of evaluation with the piano is a music festival that I play in, in which you get evaluated. I enjoy it because it gives me something to look forward to and to work towards.

Also, I prefer evaluation with subjects such as math. I like to just be told, "This one is right, and that one is wrong." Then I go through them and try to figure out for myself what I did wrong. It annoys me when I can't figure it out and I have to ask for help. That is one of the reasons that I enjoy computer programming. If something is wrong in a program, the computer will sometimes give you suggestions on how to correct the problem, but you are mostly on your own to figure out how to solve the problem.

Feedback, though, is almost absolutely necessary for ballet and music. It is also very helpful in theater and singing to have someone watching or listening and giving feedback about how they feel you can improve your performance, especially if you are working with a group of other people. For instance, in theater when you are on stage you can't always see where everyone else is, so it is helpful to have a director or some other person giving you constant feedback on how what you are doing looks. They can tell you if you should exaggerate more, or less, if you should move farther in a certain direction. These things can best be seen by someone who is watching from the audience's point of view, from which things look a lot different than they feel when you are actually doing them.

In singing it is also helpful to have someone who is not singing listen and tell you how it sounds. I was trained to sing in a group, and the director would constantly tell different people to sing louder or softer. When you are singing you can hear yourself, so even if you are singing really softly and the audience couldn't hear you, you would never know unless someone told you.

So depending on the circumstances I feel that both evaluation and feedback can be very helpful.

Opposition to Testing

Negotiating in Minnesota

From N.S. Gill of Minnesota:

When I read Pamila Daniel's "Worried about Tests" in GWS #91, I thought that perhaps I could offer her some encouragement based on my experience with the school district and with one of the legislators who was instrumental in our state's homeschooling law.

Some of us homeschoolers went to the state capitol recently to try to meet our legislators informally. The first legislator we talked with has a grandson who is homeschooled and a legislative assistant who homeschools her children. The second State Senator I had the pleasure of talking with is very supportive of homeschooling and had been one of the sponsors of our homeschooling law. She was surprised that I had trouble with any part of the law and immediately wanted to know the details of the problem I felt with tests. Since I was not prepared to criticize the law, I babbled and promised her a letter explaining the frustrations that many of us feel. What was most enlightening about the experience was the realization that legislators may actually believe that the testing they have mandated is something that we want.

The second experience came with the Minneapolis public school's new homeschooling facilitator, Tom Murray. When I spoke with him last fall about my son's first year as a registered homeschooler, Tom scared me with his closed-ended questions, like, "How many minutes do you spend on arithmetic? At what time do you do arithmetic?" I could not answer him, but told him that I do arithmetic with my son mostly in the evening whenever he is in the mood and the time frame may be five minutes to a couple of hours. Tom was new and really wanted answers, but I just as stubbornly refused to lie. One of my friends, complaining to Tom about her own problems with his intrusive questions, told him about my frustration. Tom's zealous inquiries about time frames stopped; in addition, he wrote a letter to our local homeschool newsletter explaining which questions we were required to answer and which ones we could ignore.

Feeling that maybe Tom was not such a bad guy after all, I decided to write him before my son takes his test this spring. If my son falls below the 30th percentile (which he will in reading at least because he does not read), the law requries additional evaluation. I hoped that I could stave off the "well-intentioned" remedial services of the public schools by asking Tom for help. To this end I wrote (briefly citing the Moores and Holt) that provided a child is not ridiculed for failure at an early age, he will be reading at the same level as anyone else when he is a teen, even if he does not start reading until he is 10. I also wrote that my son has a slight vision problem that would be aggravated by close work.

In response I received the following reassuring letter:

"Thank you for your thoughtful correspondence regarding the assessment of your son. I visited with Barry Sullivan of the Minnesota Department of Education as well as our Char Rogers in Evaluation and Testing about assessment procedures for your son. Both agreed that he should make an effort at the test, but that this should not be a punishing experience, and if it should reach that point you should move to another area of the test where he is more comfortable.

"The law does speak to the matter of assessment scores that fall below the 30th percentile, and the responsibility of parents to attain additional evaluation of the child's abilities and peformance for the purpose of determining whether the child has a learning problem. As I understand it, this was a safeguard to ensure that a child's abilities were considered in educational programming. I believe that you have already considered these factors in the education of your son, and that no further assessment would be necessary at this time.

"I believe that we have all come to this understanding of the law as a result of your thoughtful correspondence, and your unique educational programming for your son. This rationale may not be appropriate for another student in another home school program."

As to what my "unique educational programming" means, I can only guess that it refers to the clues they have had about our lack of formal structure. I don't know if this will help, but there is a chance that with the growing number of homeschooling families, there is also a growing number of our supporters in positions of power.

... in Nevada

Cher Bateman (NV) writes:

In response to Pamila Daniel, my oldest son was also a late reader and did very poorly on the reading section of the standardized tests while scoring above average in the other areas. Our district's administrators recommended to the school board that our homeschooling rights be revoked when my son was 10. We signed him up for a summer reading program at our state university for two summers. That, along with our direct plea to our school board, prompted them to overturn the administrative recommendation. He continued to score substantially below grade level in reading on the annual tests but they quit hassling us about it.

When it was still OK to order standardized achievement tests without being a certified teacher, I ordered a pile of them. Three weeks before the required test I would cram my poor kid with practice tests; in fact, he practiced on the exact tests he was about to take and he was still low in reading.

Our state school board as well as our local school board are not at this point agreeable to eliminating the annual test stipulation in the homeschooling regulation. However, as a member of the state homeschool advisory council for over two years I have fought to insure that no one else has their homeschooling rights jeopardized as a result of poor test scores.

My son is now 18 and a senior in high school. He has had the second highest grade point average in his class since his freshman year. He learned to read when he was 12.

... and in Hawaii

Gail Nagasako wrote in the January/February 1993 issue of The Tropical Homeschooler, *a Hawaii newsletter:*

Under the old regulations [in Hawaii], all students were required to submit to standardized tests after grades 3, 6, 8, and 10. The new regulations state, "The parent may request and the principal may approve other means of evaluation to meet the Statewide Testing Program." When this wording was being discussed at the hearings, I told the panel I felt the regulation should include a description of our options, should our principal refuse our request. I was told by Mr. Roy Hirose, then the Deputy Superinendent of Schools for Maui, that Department of Education policy already has avenues of recourse for when there are irreconcilable differences with school personnel. From an earlier meeting with him in his office at the DOE, I knew that he was supportive of homeschooling because of our excellent results, so I accepted his answer. By the time the new regulations had been put into effect, he had retired.

In March of what the schools considered my son's third grade, I wrote to my principal offering to submit as my alternative to testing: 1) a short video tape of some of his typical activities; 2) analyses written by some of the various adults with whom he's had regular contact; 3) an informal meeting whereby the principal could meet him personally, with me present, of course. I felt these were all objective evidence of my son's progress and that they would make it obvious that he's doing just fine.

My principal refused, saying Thumper must take the tests, either at school or at my own expense. I had several conversations with him and with the Maui DOE and they all insisted that the regulations allowed no exemptions to these tests, so I wrote to Dr. Aizawa, the Assistant Superintendent of Schools for the State of Hawaii. In my four-page letter, I went over the regulations in detail and explained why I felt an alternative to testing was needed in our case. I sent copies of this letter to my principal, to the Deputy District Superintendent on Maui, to the state Educational Specialist and to the editor of the Oahu homeschoolers' newsletter.

Dr. Aizawa agreed with my reading of the regulations and that "other means" were appropriate in my case. He said, however, that he wanted a more objective analysis of Thumper's progress and enclosed a draft copy of "Student Outcomes for the Foundation Program Objectives for the Public Schools of Hawaii." Never mind that this was a draft and that it was for public schools. While not unreasonable in theory, this 67-page document read like a college term paper and described the skills and abilities a child should have at each of the testing grades. Dr. Aizawa suggested that I devise some method of demonstrating my son's achievement. These "proficiencies" were broken into such detail as to be virtually meaningless and there were 99 of them just for grade 3. Examples are "Seeks clarification of ideas," "Interprets common visual symbols," "Identifies different emotions and ways they are shown," "Performs basic body movements," "Expresses ideas for consideration and accepts and incorporates ideas of others." I mean, DUH... how could any 9 year old not chained in an attic or imprisoned in school not have these skills? But to set out to prove 99 of these to bureaucrats is another thing. Manufacturers of SATs have multi-million dollar budgets and huge staffs and few people believe that their tests measure these or anything else of much meaning.

He also included a letter from the State Psychologist who suggested such things as a portfolio, audio tapes, lists of materials used in the home, and structured interviews which would essentially be verbal SATs. The last thing I wanted was to have my son subjected to structured interviews by a psychologist trained to find or imagine all sorts of apologies with long-winded names.

Fortunately, Dr. Aizawa suggested I could work through an "independent source," and for this I enlisted William Vitarelli, Ph.D. He viewed my video, read the "Foundation Program Objectives," and wrote an important-sounding document which basically said that Thumper was developing just fine. We included a lot of information about Dr. Vitarelli's credentials which clearly rendered him qualified to make such a judgment.

My principal rejected the report because it didn't include "statements of progress in each of the subject areas included in the child's curriculum," and he went on to say that I "should have included representative tests and assignments, if possible, in the various subject areas." He again recommended SATs.

I wrote him again, reasserting that Dr. Vitarelli had analyzed that, and that this was our "test," and that Thumper had "passed" with "satisfactory results." Mr. Arakaki wrote, "May I reiterate that the report from Dr. Vitarelli is not acceptable" and again suggested SATs.

By this time I was ready to write to Mr. Arakaki and the entire DOE to ask them just who do they think they are to judge my son and his progress when I see their failed products on the streets every day. I satisfied myself by writing a long letter which I never sent, but would be happy to share, stating my objections to the "Foundation Program Objectives," to standardized testing, and ended by quoting an abundance of Supreme Court decisions supporting my rights in this matter.

The letter I did send stated, "I cannot in good conscience have my son submit to a standardized test so I am choosing instead to render more complete the report done by Dr. Vitarelli...." I wrote up a statement of my son's curriculum, which is very different from the school's curriculum; I submitted the video I'd suggested in the first place; and I included a shorter-than-usual year-end narrative report that I wrote. I made it clear that I was sure these demonstrated acceptable progress for a third grader, and in between the lines it was also clear that I was prepared to continue this fight forever, and that he could end up looking very foolish to not accept my report. By now it was August.

A month later, I received the terse letter which stated only, "After reviewing the additional reports submitted for Jordan, we will approve continued homeschooling for him for the 1992-93 school year." I don't know who "we" is, and I don't begrudge him; his false face-saving belief that I need his approval to continue homeschooling, but I was sure glad to be done with all that nuisance (and I'm sure he'd say that feeling is mutual!).

I discovered too late a quote in *Teach Your Own* that said that when dealing with school officials, don't ever ask a question that permits an answer you don't want. I violated this when I proposed what I wanted to submit, leaving myself open to the rejection. I should have simply submitted what I wanted to send in the first place. It was well worth the trouble, though, as I now know a lot more about the thinking at various levels of the DOE and I still have my long, unsent letter ready to use if I ever have to go to court over any of this.

Testing is Traumatic

Pamela Wheeler (IN) writes:

Not wanting our kids tested is absolutely a valid concern. Testing is traumatic for most kids, especially when given by "hostile forces." Because our son, 8 years old at the time, was not reading very much, we succumbed to pressure and got him tested at a reading clinic. This woman was supposed to be an expert, having run this clinic for twelve years. In the first five minutes of the interview before the testing, she made it quite clear that my son was behind other kids and she said so in front of him. I very firmly stated that it isn't a contest and that all children who learn to read learn best at their own speed, and that the only children I've ever met who can't read by age 18 are in the school system.

One minute into the testing she came running out, saying she'd never before seen what she just saw - a child who can't recognize a word visually, yet if she spells it, he knows it. Later she showed us the "reward system" for kids - stickers that earn prizes. I told her that rewarding a child makes him lose his self-motivation - definitely something to protect.

This woman was obviously very phony - something my son saw immediately. But he submitted to it with patience and curiosity, rather than resentment. How did his mother do? I saw it as an opportunity to grow without resentment, even though at first I was almost in tears. It made me and my husband more determined than ever to protect our son from society's control. We understand the forces at work in this country, especially in the school system. A strong, centered, aware person cannot be controlled by others; it's only our anger and resentment that allow that to happen.

Right now, Indiana does not require testing, but there's a strong push for it and it probably will be pushed in, riding on another bill. We do, however, have lots of groups (including one with a judge on the board) keeping an eye on the situation.

My advice to Pamila is to think of her main goal: is it to protect the child? Then calmly fight for your child. You may want to read *In Their Own Way* by Thomas Armstrong. It helped me a lot to arm myself with both knowledge and understanding of my child's right to learn in his own way.

These people in authority do have a lot of power, but most of the power they have we give them when we get upset by them.

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Challenging the Labels

From a longer article that Jan Hunt (BC) wrote for a Canadian newspaper:

Imagine for a moment that you are visiting a plant nursery. You hear a commotion outside, so you investigate. You find a young assistant struggling with a rose bush. He is trying to force open the petals of a rose, and muttering in frustration. You ask him what he is doing, and he explains, "My boss wants all these roses to bloom this week, so last week I taped all the early ones, and now I'm opening the late ones." You protest that every rose has its own schedule of blooming; it is absurd to try to slow down or speed this up; it doesn't matter when roses bloom; a rose will always bloom at its own best time.

You look at the rose again, and see that it is wilting. But when you point this out, he replies, "Oh, too bad, it has genetic dysbloomia. I'll have to call an expert." "No, no!" you say. "You *caused* the wilting. All you needed to do was meet the flower's needs for water and sunshine, and leave the rest to nature!" You can't believe this is happening. Why is his boss so unrealistic and uninformed about roses?

Such a scene would never take place in a nursery, of course, but it happens daily in schools. Teachers, pressured by *their* bosses, follow official timetables which demand that all children learn at the same rate, and in the same way. Yet children are no different from roses in their development: they are born with the capacity and desire to learn, they learn at different rates, and they learn in different ways. If we can meet their needs, provide a safe, nurturing environment, and keep from interfering with our doubts, anxieties, and arbitrary timetables, then - like roses - they will bloom at their own best time.

My heart goes out to those children who have been labeled ADHD ("attention-deficit and hyperactivity disorder"), the latest "learning disability" label. Many educators and researchers believe that these children and their families have been cruelly deceived by the use of these labels. Dr. Thomas Armstrong, a former learning disabilities specialist, changed professions when he "began to see how this notion of learning disabilities was handicapping all of our children by placing the blame for a child's learning failure on mysterious neurological deficiencies in the brain instead of on much-needed reforms in our system of education." ...

Are learning difficulties in reality the understandable response of normal children forced to conform to the abnormal conditions of conventional classrooms? Most tellingly, have the schools failed to see the crucial difference between *mere descriptions* of common, temporary learning errors worsened by stress, and *scientific proof?* While the supposed neurological anomalies have never been identified, it isn't difficult to locate abnormal conditions in the learning environment of the schools: fierce competition, physical inactivity (especially difficult for boys), fragmented topics which bear little relationship to the child's own interests and experiences, constant checking - and doubting - of progress, insufficient family time, few opportunities to meet people of other ages, lack of quiet time for privacy and contemplation, constant abrupt changes of topics (preventing in-depth learning), few opportunities for a teacher's undivided attention, discouragement of sharing work and ideas with classmates (a golden opportunity missed), teasing from other frustrated children, the discouragement brought on by self-fulfilling labels, and, above all, the indignity of being a powerless "non-person," whose legitimate needs and attempts to communicate those needs are smothered by institutional defensiveness. All of these difficulties can be avoided in homeschooling.

"Labeling is disabling" because children believe what we tell them. If we must label something, let it be the learning environment, not the learner: instead of "hyperactive child," let's concern ourselves with "activity-restrictive" schools; instead of an "attention-deficient" student, we ought to worry about "inspiration-deficient" classrooms; instead of a "school-phobic child," we should use honest words such as "anxious" and "frightened," and be very careful when we look for sources of that anxiety. ... Let's look for the simplest theory that fits the facts, not the most obscure and complicated one. A stressful, punitive, and threatening environment more than sufficiently explains learning problems. There is no need to confuse ourselves with school techspeak, unproven theories, and scapegoating which serve to protect a social institution that has failed our children.

A Mother Learns to Understand Her Child

Kate Kerman wrote in the Winter 1993 issue of SKOLE: The Journal of Alternative Education:

Ada took to reading at a very early age - around 3. I encouraged her and she was intent on learning. I think I could have held her off for a year, and would now choose to do so, since I think her eyesight suffered and that she has had to work to regain balance between her reading and more physically concrete activities. From Ada I have learned the value of following my own instinct in terms of allowing dependence until independence came naturally. We got a lot of complaints from other adults about how much we kept Ada with us - they worried when she was 18 months old that she was so dependent on us. I started being very grateful to myself that I had raised her that way when she blossomed into an amazingly independent and resourceful child. The point where I stopped worrying about it was when she was 5 or 6 and she came and showed me a game she had bought at a store one day while we were in town. There were several pieces missing. I said, "Oh, we should go return that." I turned around a minute later and discovered that she had gone off by herself to get a replacement - the kind of thing I still have a hard time doing.

Hannah, our second child, was mind-bogglingly different from her older sister Ada. We adopted her at the age of 11 weeks, and I spent essentially the next eight years in struggle with her. She and I are both very stubborn people. By the time she was 18 months old, Ed and I were out at STEP parenting classes, trying to figure out how we could do this whole thing better. Ada had fit our style - let's talk it out and not get too emotional. Hannah was a whirlwind of emotions and contrariness. Ada learned to read when she was 3 and she simply absorbed all that schooly stuff - math, spelling, writing, how to tell time, ideas about history and other cultures. It all went into her brain and got categorized into easily retrievable files. Hannah learned to read when she was 11, and generally tended to ignore anything schooly. I wasn't accustomed to honoring the kind of learning she did best - watching people, sitting with animals and plants, listening, listening, listening to the world around her, standing as a toddler with her arms crossed on her chest and solemnly observing a friend of ours for twenty minutes until he became incredibly nervous, singing, singing, singing to her dolls and clamming up if I tried to listen in. She was the original for that statement you read in newspapers: "She sought her own treatment after the accident." Hannah did not want anyone else to direct her life, to tell her what to wear, how to get well, when to wash dishes, or what and how to learn. The more I tried, the less it worked.

Finally, we started to learn how to honor her way. A very big influence on this was a week-long workshop that 8-year-old Hannah and Ed attended at Pendle Hill, a Quaker study center near Philadelphia. It was led by Twylah Nitsch, a Seneca Elder. She took Ed aside after watching Hannah for several days not participating in the group. She told him three very important things about Hannah, who is half Native American. "Hannah is a little Indian girl. And if you are walking with an Indian and tell him to speed up, it is in his character to slow down." Secondly, "She must wear the colors of clothing she chooses for herself. That is very important." (Aha! Is this why Hannah has spent seven years changing clothes several times a day?) And thirdly, "You must honor her for her strengths. When she feels accepted for who she is, she will learn to read."

Our second child was mind-bogglingly different from her older sister. I wasn't accustomed to honoring the kind of learning she did best.

We homeschooled our children, and had nominally accepted the theory that children learn to read when they are ready. Accepting a theory like that is easiest when your oldest child learns to read early. Dealing with the reality of Hannah's approach was a lot more of a challenge to me, coming as I do from a very academically oriented family. It took me two full years to come to grips with the truth of what Twylah had said. What finally tipped the balance was that we moved and we had to go to our new school district and arrange a homeschooling program for Hannah, now 10 1/2 years old and reading at a bare *Cat in the Hat* level. I prayed a great deal before that meeting, and the help that came to me was a very firm understanding that I could not myself take credit for Ada's so-called academic advancement or blame for Hannah's so-called slowness. They were who they were and I was proud of both of them, and of myself for giving them what they needed and wanted. By then, I had done some reading and learning about Native American spirituality and I knew that Hannah's approach to the world came from that perspective. I couldn't teach her that approach myself, only respect it and help her pursue it as it arose. So I went into the meeting well-prepared, meeting the shock and concern over Hannah's reading with strength.

During the course of the next year she did learn the basics about reading, although I shall never know how, since she refused instruction as much as always. We continued to read out loud to her, and she rarely read to herself. My main consolation was the fact that she loved books and didn't seem to think badly of herself. At the age of 14, she started to read Scott O'Dell's books. The first one took her two months to read. Two months later, she had read four or five of them. Within six months, she was reading full-length adult fantasy novels, almost entirely feminist ones by such authors as Mercedes Lackey. She reads voraciously now at the age of 16, and is in the process of writing a long fantasy story which shows how much she has paid attention to the use of language and plot ideas. As a freshman at The Meeting School [an alternative boarding school where Kate is a teacher], she has done well in her classes because she knows what she is aiming for - a career working with animals, either as a vet or in some other way. Her spelling is still atrocious, and she is still working on arithmetic, but she feels great about herself and has become a major influence on the people around her because she is such a good listener and friend, such a thoughtful observer of the community.

Hannah's learning to read was a big process for her, and a life-changing process for me. I think she waited to learn until I accepted her fully, and I am grateful to her for her persistence. It would be nice, I think sometimes, to go back and start accepting her the day she came to us, but I am glad of the lessons we have learned from her in our slow and painful manner. Without her tutelage, I don't believe I could be working effectively with other teenagers at The Meeting School. From her I have learned that it is essential to stay connected with that inner core of another person in order to give them the space to explore and learn what they can become.

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Children in the Workplace

Don Trana (IA) writes:

In response to Will Clarke's letter in GWS #85, I would like to offer my perspective on involving children in your work. I own and operate an auto glass business with five employees. In addition to auto glass we also rent used cars, replace vinyl tops, install auto accessories, and detail cars. There is always a variety of work to do with differing skills and physical requirements. I checked with the state on rules involving children in the workplace and found out that in general, children should be kept from tools and power equipment, transportation, and dangerous chemicals. As far as your own children, the state of Iowa tends to leave the judgment up to you, much the same as if you were at home, making those same decisions about your children's safety. Other states may have different rules or guidelines.

In answer to the question of professionalism and how customers or clients perceive children in the workplace, I feel as long as your insurance covers children you will have met 75% of their concern. For the rest, professionalism is a trait that is perceived in a customer's mind, as a direct result of the employee's behavior and appearance. Counsel your child on the importance of being professional and customer-service oriented. To help them along, make sure they have a company T-shirt, hat, or jacket so that they feel they are proudly identified with the company and will accept that responsibility.

My children have greatly benefited from working in my business. They have developed a strong work ethic, learned to follow and give orders, learned the importance of organization and commitment, and learned customer and vendor relations. I have learned to respect my children's ideas and opinions and best of all, I've had the advantage of spending quality time with them.

LeAnn Trana adds:

The kids have taken turns going into work with their dad on Saturday mornings since they were 5 or 6, to have fun and to have one-on-one time with him. Don didn't really ever have it in mind to employ them, but the older they got, the more they wanted to be involved in the real work that was taking place. Gradually, Don realized that the Saturday mornings had become unstructured training time for what would become some of his most valued employees, and he felt they could and should have the option to use what they had learned to make some money of their own.

The year before we began homeschooling, the two oldest girls started helping out in the office (answering the phone, filing, figuring estimates) and in the shop (washing windows, vacuuming cars, installing rear view mirrors). Now three of our daughters are working one day a week each. Their duties have increased as they have acquired more knowledge of the business. Now in the office their duties include computerized accounting, calculating and estimating jobs, scheduling, customer relations and sales, and in the shop they do paint sealants, auto detailing, door glass repairs, product testing, and assisting on the mobil route.

Last year (our third year of homeschooling) the girls had to make a decision about whether their dad should hire a part-time employee or whether they were willing to make a commitment to coming in one day a week. They all agreed that the biggest problem with this would be having to miss out on special things going on with the rest of the family at home. This was resolved by finding a young man who was willing to come in on an irregular basis with fairly short notice. Of course things can still come up at the same time with no time for the girls to change their schedule, but this can happen just as easily when the girls have taken a babysitting job or planned some other activity that conflicts with family plans.

Just a few months ago my oldest daughter, now 17, told me that sometimes she doesn't like thinking about getting up in the morning and going to work, but she also always feels differently once she gets there. She said she knew that whenever the time comes that she isn't working there any longer, she will miss the other employees and the excitement of the busy days, because they have a lot of fun together while the work is being done. She also said she feels she has learned a lot from her dad about treating others fairly and what to expect from an employer and an employee, which will help her in the future.

Jenny, 13, told me that she's learned how to work with different kinds of people and that she can handle work even though she's a child. She said, "My dad has hired some older teenage boys sometimes, and it's interesting to see how they take training from a 13-year-old girl. I was really surprised that most of the time they don't act strange about it at all, and take me seriously when they're learning a job or if I have to have them redo something. But it's also been interesting to watch how some people work just to get by, for the money, and some people give extra."

I believe it's only a remote possibility that any of our children will choose their dad's line of work for their own as adults - not because they dislike it, but because we've never pressured them in that direction, knowing that they all have their own interests to pursue in order to be fulfilled and happy people.

Resources & Recommendations

Multicultural Children's Literature

[SS:] We received the Children's Book Press catalog, which features "award-winning multicultural literature and audio cassettes for children," and it looks full of good materials, particularly for people who don't have access to bookstores that sell out-of-the-mainstream children's books. There are stories from African-American, Jewish, Native American, Mexican, and many other cultures, and several are in both Spanish and English. Write Children's Book Press, 1461 9th Av, San Francisco CA 94122; 510-655-3395.

Montessori Catalog

[PF:] Michael Olaf Company's latest catalog is a wonderful introduction to Montessori philosophy as well as a very useful resource for homeschoolers. It has real tools for kids, wooden playthings, math manipulatives, etc. They request $5 for the catalog, but it can be used as a credit to be applied to your first order. Michael Olaf Company, "The Montessori Store," PO Box 1162, Arcata CA 95521.

Child-Sized Work Gloves

Linda Felker of Pennsylvania writes:

Several times, in past issues of GWS, you have printed letters from readers looking for children's work gloves. I recently saw work gloves sized for children in a catalog called *Kaplan*, PO Box 609, Lewisville NC 27023-0609.

Queries

Database of Homeschool Groups

Ted Wade of Gazelle Publications sent us this notice:

We are preparing a database of support groups and other organizations serving home educators. The information will be used as a source for some of the 12 or more appendix sections to be in the next edition of *The Home School Manual*. We want group names, addresses, phone numbers, philosophical stance, and whatever you think people will want to know about what you are doing or selling or providing. If you think your organization will likely still be around five years from now, we want to hear from you. Although providing information doesn't guarantee being listed, we aren't likely to pass over many who write to us. If we edit your copy, we will send a proof for confirmation. Current listing does not guarantee being included again. There is no charge for being listed.

Also, we would be happy to hear from people who have suggestions for improving the material in the 48 chapters of the current (4th) edition of *The Home School Manual*.

Sending partial information (which we can verify later) is better than taking a chance of forgetting. Thank you very much. Ted Wade, Gazelle Publications, 5580 Stanley Dr, Auburn CA 95602.

Low-Income Family Wants Advice and Used Materials

Lourdes Rivas, 4114 Hickory Sun, San Antonio TX 78244, writes:

I have received a complimentary issue of GWS and it is very interesting. I love it, but I can't begin a subscription now because of financial hardship. I am writing this letter to ask for help. My husband does work, but he had to take a setback in his income - he works as a custodian making $6.50 an hour. His check pays only for necessities. I was working part time, but I stopped work to homeschool my children. My children are very happy learning at home, and we are very happy teaching them. When we talk to the children about maybe having to send them back to school, they are scared, confused, and devastated just thinking about it. I feel very guilty because the children beg and plead with me not to send them back to school and say that they want to stay home.

I need help fast but I don't have any money to pay for advice or books or magazines that can help our situation. If anyone has any ideas about how to make money working at home, without interfering with our homeschool, and would like to share that with me, I would appreciate that very much. I have tried to work at home, babysitting after school, but they were all bad experiences. These children were bringing too many problems from home and school into our Christian home; they were bad examples for our children. After that I tried to sell a few arts and crafts but I didn't have enough money to invest in this project. I am trying to get ahead, but we can't see the light at the end of the tunnel.

If anyone has any homeschool materials or school supplies that they would like to donate to our family, the grades that we need are K, 1st, and 2nd. My children are all boys. Any used curricula, books, art supplies, learning games - we are in need of all these things. I'm not asking for money, just used material.

My husband didn't want me to write this letter. He loves homeschooling but he said that if we can't afford it, we should put the children back in school. But I can't stand to see my children suffer the way they did when I told them they might have to go to school. I promised wonderful years of homeschooling ahead, and now I can't keep that promise.

Thank you so much. I greatly appreciate any help that families can offer.

Survey of Bedtimes

Tamar Mali, PO Box 1026, Creswell OR 97426, writes:

I am 12 and the oldest of four kids. I'm taking a survey to find out how many kids go to sleep at 9:00 pm. The reason for this survey is that my dad's favorite words are, "Why aren't you kids in bed by 9:00 pm?" I am sick of those words and I'm asking that you kids or parents will write me and tell me when you go to bed.

Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since our last issue. Our complete 1993 Directory was published in GWS #90. Our Directory is *not* a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses, that person is in the Directory (check here *and* in GWS #90 and #91). We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are not in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

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LA — Dennis & Alyce WISE (James/85, Danielle/90) 59126 Hwy 433, Slidell 70460 **(H)**

ME — Anne & Jeff SAWYER (Ben/86, Erin/88) Bass Harbor 04653-0097

MD — Madeline TODD, 2924 Southwater Point Dr, Annapolis 21401

MA — Susan Sloane HEIDT (Audrey/81) 80 Pine Hill Av, Duxbury 02332 **(H)** ••• Judith HUMBERT (Matthew/85, Marc/88) Cape Ann Homeschoolers, 6 Emily Ln, Magnolia 01930

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TX — Tim & Jenny GRIFFIN (Lindsey/86) Rt 3 Box 425-B2, Quinlan 75474

UT — Steve & Penny THOMAS (Julie/71, Tammy/73, Ann/74, Sarah/76, Carmen/77, Shonna/79, Cole/83, Brynne/85) 634 W 80 N, Orem 84057

VA — Corey AVELLAR & Virginia NATHAN (Ian/89, Izabelle/90, Eleanor/91, Laurel/92) Rt 3 Box 119 F, Floyd 24091 ••• Greg McGARY & Wendy LOWE (Jordan/92) 525 K East Market St #110, Leesburg 22075 **(H)**

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WY — Chris & Richard ANDERSON-SPRECHER (Andrew/80, Peter/83) Unschoolers of Wyoming, 429 Hwy 230 #20, Laramie 82070 **(H)**

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Alta — Sylvia & Otto BUTTNER-SCHNIRER (Moira/75, Patrick/79, Katya/83, Stephen/84, Tony/86) 47 Broad View Cres, St Albert T8N 0B1 **(H)** ••• Elizabeth & Ray CARLSON (Jennifer/82, Tommy/87) 545-7 St West, High River T1V 1B9

Ont — Anne QUICK & Jim ROSS (Polly/81, Jenny/83, Christy/86) RR 3, Maberly K0H 2B0 (change) **(H)**

Other Locations — Uri & Sophie HENIG (Otniel/92) Wolfson College, Oxford 0X2 GUD, **England**

Groups to Add to the Directory of Organizations:

AL — East Lake UMC Academy, 1603 Great Pine Rd, Birmingham 35235

CO — Independent Network of Creative Homeschoolers, c/o Woodhouse, 724 Victor St, Aurora 80011 303-340-3185; 303-751-6421

MA — Cape Ann Homeschoolers, 6 Emily Ln, Magnolia 01930 ••• Home Education Resource Center, 505 East St, Pittsfield 01201 413-684-2346

ME — Peninsula Area Homeschooling Assoc, PO Box 235, Deer Isle 04627

NH — Support Alternative Family Education, 68 Forrest St, Unit 6B, Plaistow 03865 603-382-3815

NY — Albany Area Homeschoolers, 46 Pershing Dr, Scotia 12302 518-346-3413 ••• Tri-County Homeschoolers, c/o Betsy Lewis, (Rockland County) (between 6 & 10 AM) 914-429-5156

OR — Mid-Valley Secular Homeschoolers (Salem area),. 503-362-1203

WY — Unschoolers of Wyoming, 429 Hwy 230 #20, Laramie 82070

Address Changes:

Helpful Schools — Home-Centered Learning PO Box 4643, Whittier CA 90607; 310-696-4696

MA — Metro West Homeschoolers, 25 Carter Dr, Framingham 01701 508-877-6536

NC — Families Learning Together, 1724 Azalea Dr, Wilmington 28405

Delete:

NY — Western NY Homeschooling Network

Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Please try to write to the kids who are already listed before sending in your own name. When writing to pen-pals, be sure to put your own name and address on your letter, not just on your envelope.

To be listed here, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. Daniel PERRY (8) 6007 W Scott Rd, Homer NY 13077; Legos, Scouts, farming ••• Joseph BILLECI (6) 1885 Ednamary Way Apt B, Mt View CA 94040; Legos, Tae Kwon Do, biking ••• SHEPPERD, PO Box 560332, The Colony TX 75056: Jennifer (13) drama, reading, singing; Becky (12) swimming, horseback riding, babysitting; Chris (10) horseback riding, swimming, baseball ••• Brian WARSHAW (10) 35 Harborage Av, Bayville NJ 08721; writing, archery, acting ••• MEAD, 495 Erickson Rd, Centerville WA 98613: Mary (15) music, acting, cooking; Kate (60 acting, Legos, violin ••• EICHHOLZ, 228 Waverly Rd, Wilmington DE 19803-3135: Holly (15) The Prisoner, England, Star Trek; Heather (15) Star Trek, Rod Serling, Columbo; Jennifer (14) The Prisoner, Star Trek, plants ••• Erin BORCHERS (11) 2588 N 16 St, Springfield OR 97477; Nintendo, biking, reading ••• Catherine CUMBIE (8) 2310 Creswell Rd, Bel Air MD 21015; skating, swimming, Barbies ••• CAMPFIELD, 3634 Hartford, St. Louis MO 63116: Amy (9) sports, nature, reading; Sarah (9) skating, flowers, animals ••• Elsbeth McNAMARA (8) 125 Old

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ENTRY FORM FOR DIRECTORY

Use this form to send us a new entry or a substantial address change to be run in the next available issue of GWS.

Adults (first *and* last names):

Organization (only if address is same as family):

Children (names/birthyears):

Full address (Street, City, State, Zip):

Are you willing to host traveling GWS readers who make advance arrangements in writing? Yes ___ No ___

Are you in the 1993 Directory (GWS #90) Yes ___ No ___
Or in the additions in this issue or in GWS #91? Yes ___ No ___

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Field Rd, Setauket NY 11733; baseball, animals, art ••• Rachel COMPTON (8) Box 2006, Kent CT 06757; animals, ballet, music ••• SAWYER, PO Box 97, Bass Harbor ME 04653; Ben (7) electronics, electricity, math; Erin (5) dolls, babies, mermaids ••• Jesse WILLIAMS (13) 1889 H Street Rd, Blaine WA 98230; overseas pen-pals, baseball, biking ••• Sara SMITH (12) PO Box 1875, Panama City FL 32402; drawing, animals, reading ••• Graham KRAMER (7) PO Box 7095, Kingsport TN 37664; Legos, caving, stamps ••• Michelle KNIFFIN (5) 179 Spruce Knob, Middletown Springs VT 05757; dress-up, sledding, dolls

Anna from Connecticut: Please write again to Ashley Wilkinson in Colorado and include your address!

When You Write Us

Please - (1) Put separate items of business on separate sheets of paper. (2) Put your name and address at the top of each letter. (3) If you ask questions, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (4) Tell us if it's OK to publish your letter, and whether to use your name with the story. We edit letters for space and clarity.

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The number that is underlined in the example tells the date of the final issue for the subscription. The Smiths' sub expires with our 6/1/93 issue (#93, the next issue). But if we were to receive their renewal before the end of the previous month (5/31), they would qualify for the free bonus issue.

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For shipping charges, see chart on page 17.

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Trevor Killory-Andersen is among those who write for this issue's Focus, "I'll Never Do *That* When I Grow Up," pages 19-21.

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PS 022102

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If getting along with people involves learning to see things from another's perspective, getting along with people of very different ages often pushes this skill to the limit. It's hard for an adult to understand why a small child screams furiously when a new cup is substituted for his usual one, for example, and it's hard for a young child to understand why her parent calls the wonderful house she's made out of the cushions "that awful mess." But of course adults and children persevere in their efforts to understand each other, since they do in fact get so much of value from being with each other.

Sometimes, though, it's hard for kids to explain themselves right at the time of the misunderstanding. They may not have the words, or the adult may not give them a chance, or they may be so cowed by the adult's size and power that they won't try. That's why it's important to make a special effort to ask kids how things look and feel to them. Many of us adults made vows as children never to do *that* to kids when we grew up - whatever particular indignity or misunderstanding "that" represented at the time. But it's so easy to forget those vows as our perspective, unavoidably, becomes the adult's. For this issue we asked several kids to tell us about those vows they've made to themselves: "When I grow up, I'm going to treat kids like this..." or "I hope I never forget how kids feel when...". Because these writers are young (some of them are only 6), their vows and the feelings that engendered them are still fresh in their minds. It's good for those of us who are farther away from that time of life to be reminded of how things look and feel to children.

And then what? What can we do after we are reminded of how kids would like to be treated? One thing that comes through in these letters is that kids are very forgiving if it seems as though the adult is willing to learn and to act more respectfully next time. Many GWS readers already do spend a lot of time thinking about how to treat children, though, and the problem may be that other people, outside the family, are not as thoughtful. What can we do about the fact that respectful treatment of children is not the norm in our culture? Here John Holt offers some advice:

"Paul Goodman, in his many talks with young people, used to say that one good way to work for a truly different and better world was to act in their daily lives, as far as they could, as if that world existed. What would you do, he would ask them, if the world had become more or less the kind of place you want it to be; how would you live, how would you treat other people? Live that way now, treat them that way now. If something prevents you, try to find a way to deal with that. We can begin to treat children, even the youngest and smallest, wherever we may find them, as we would want everyone to treat them in the society we are trying to make." — Susannah Sheffer

Office News & Announcements

[SS:] We're now in the middle of a very busy conference season, and we've also been getting some interesting publicity. NBC TV news aired a feature story on May 11th which focused on families who have older kids and who are *not* homeschooling for religious reasons. *Women's World* also plans to run a story - it may be in their June issue.

Speaking of publicity, some letters in this issue give good suggestions for things to do *besides* talk to reporters. Let us know if you've had any success using our clip-out form on page 31 - we'd like to know if this leads to anything interesting and if it's worth our continuing to include it.

Judith Allee, who writes in this issue about ideas for homeschooling with very little money, suggests that we ask to hear from readers who run family businesses or earn money from home in some other way. We've always been interested in this and in all stories about how families arrange things so that they can homeschool, whether that means working at home, taking kids to work, involving others, or some other set-up. For example, it would be interesting to hear about ways in which kids are able to be by themselves, at home or in a safe public space, for certain periods of time. What do you do to make this easier? What kind of preparation do you give the child? Are other people accommodating, or resistant to this idea? Dawn Lease, on our staff, has just begun to allow her 10-year-old son to spend a few hours by him-self at museums, and this has worked very well in terms of his ability to remain interested and content for that time. One of the museums is being difficult about permitting this, but the other is agreeable. Please do keep writing about your family's arrangements, so that others, especially people who are considering homeschool-ing, can learn about what's possible.

Over the years we have periodically gotten letters like this one from Rachel Compton:

"I have now written to three different pen-pals listed in GWS and none have written back. If children put their names on the pen-pal list they should at least write back saying they would not like to be a particular person's pen-pal. I find it annoying to spend so much time writing to someone and not get a response. I think parents should encourage their children to at least write to say that they would not like to be this person's pen-pal. Even better, parents should encourage them to get involved in the letter writing, and then they might like it."

We know that many of good pen-pal relationships grow out of our listings, but the problem of unresponsive pen-pals does persist for some kids, too. Maybe those who list themselves get swamped by replies, or maybe not everyone thinks through what is involved in being listed. We print Rachel's letter just as a reminder.

News & Reports

Negotiating About Tests

Pamila Daniel ("Worried About Test," GWS #91) writes:

I thought I should let you know how our situation is progressing. If you recall, my son was supposed to take the standardized tests this year even though he cannot read well enough to understand them. I called the local school board. They said they had no authority to change anything, but they gave me the number of a woman at the state Department of Education. She politely tried to talk me into letting my son take the tests, so I could see where he needed improvement. I just as politely refused. Finally, she said she would move him back to the first grade level so he wouldn't have to take the tests this year. Then he could restart the second grade next fall, and take the tests in the spring of '94.

I have a year now to weigh my options. I've written to Clonlara; I've heard that they test their students and report to the school boards for them. I may just move to another state. Either way, it's a big decision, and I'm grateful I have GWS and its readers to advise me.

And from the New York State Home Education News, *published by the Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education:*

New York State's home education regulation requires an annual assessment of all children of compulsory school age who are learning at home. Under the current regulation, parents may choose to use a standardized, norm-referenced achievement test each year. As an alternative, parents may opt to use a written narrative in grades one through three and in alternate years in grades 4 through 8. From ninth grade on, standardized achievement testing must be done each year.

Since the promulgation of [this section of the regulation] in 1988, the assessment requirement has been the most controversial part of the requirement. Soon after the regulation was adopted, home educators from around the state participated in a series of meetings with former Deputy Commissioner for Elementary and Secondary Education Skip Meno. At those meetings, a framework was developed which, among other revisions, would have added to the list of possible alternative assessments and would have allowed for the use of such alternatives at every grade level.

Deputy Commissioner Meno was unable to move the proposed changes through the State Education Department, at least in part because the New York State School Boards Association was unwilling to go along with the changes. Following a series of meetings between home educators from around the state and their local Regents, a recommendation was made for the establishment of a home instruction advisory group. At the meetings of that group over the past two years, the issue of assessment reform has been a steady theme. Because of the presence of school board and superintendent representatives in the group, it was hoped that an agreement could be reached on the use of assessments which are appropriate to the approach a family takes to learning. Those efforts have been unsuccessful.

It is now time to consider the next step home educators wish to take with respect to the issue of assessment. ... As a starting point for discussion, we have drafted an amendment which would revise the current assessment provisions more or less as proposed in the earlier discussions with Dr. Meno.

The proposed amendment says that as an alternative to testing, parents may choose one of the following: (a) a portfolio of the student's work; (b) a project or demonstration by the student; (c) an interview of the student; (d) an on-site visit; (e) a written narrative; or (f) other methods approved by the State Eduation Department. The proposal also discusses methods for reviewing the assessment that the parent has chosen.

Admission to Air Force Academy

Cafi Cohen (CO) writes:

I wrote previously (GWS #81) of our son Jeff's ambition to attend the US Air Force Academy. Immediately prior to Jeff's ninth grade year, we queried the Academy about the consideration he would receive if he continued to homeschool through high school. At that time, they replied that they had admitted 2-4 homeschoolers annually for the past several years. We decided, with some trepidation on our part, but total confidence on Jeff's part, to continue homeschooling.

Jeff has spent the past year (which would have been his junior year in school) going through the USAF Academy application process. He also applied to West Point, the US Naval Academy, Boston University, and University of Colorado at Boulder, as well as to the Air Force, Army, and Naval ROTC programs. Within the past month Jeff was accepted at both BU and CU. He also was awarded various three- and four-year ROTC scholarships. Finally, yesterday, Jeff got his dream shot - acceptance to the US Air Force Academy.

Parents often wonder if home education will hamper their child's chances to attend top colleges or any colleges. In our

son's case, if anything, home education enhanced his chances to be admitted to selective institutions. Why? Time. Homeschoolers have time, time to pursue their own goals, time to interact with the real world, time to watch the clouds roll by. All are equally important for those apprentice adults we call teens.

How did Jeff spend his time? He occupied himself with a variety of pursuits, all of which I or he found ways to call "school." His activities ranged from folding origami animals and paper airplanes to poring over *The Guiness Book of World Records* to fiddling with our computers to advancing up the ranks of Civil Air Patrol. He eventually earned an FCC Advanced Class Amateur Radio License, a diploma from American School, many Civil Air Patrol awards, and miscellaneous awards for piano performance and diving. He should complete his private pilot license next month.

Real world contacts? There have been plenty: through paying jobs (giving piano lessons, babysitting, house sitting), volunteer jobs (hospital and Military Affiliate Radio System), the extended family, church groups, diving team, neighbors, friends, and family. These last couple of years, Jeff has been gone from the house *more* than he would be if he attended school.

Watching the clouds roll by has probably been the most important component of Jeff's homeschooling. He spent days doing seemingly nothing - rereading books, playing with our dogs, baking, biking, playing board games. I'm convinced he never could have accomplished all that he has (high school plus 25 college credits in three years, not to mention activities in which he excelled) without being able to determine his own "down time."

What was our (the parents') role in all this? First we had to get out of the way. We've found that Jeff and his sister will only stare at the four walls for so long. Sooner or later, they'll opt to Do Something. When they choose to Do Something, we become facilitators: help find resources, chauffeur, write checks or propose a method to pay for a desired activity, listen, discuss, etc. Finally, presenting a model of self-directed learning (i.e. pursuing our own activities) has been invaluable. The kids may or may not share our interests, but they seem to know without being told that each person is responsible for his own learning, his own entertainment, his own life.

Publicizing Homeschooling

Press Releases

Sandra Maida of New Hampshre writes:

I just received my first issue of GWS (#91) and I very much liked Susannah's front-page article concerning speaking out about homeschooling. It's just not enough that a few of us are homeschooling our children - our children still have to grow up and live in a society of publicly schooled children - angry and, possibly, violent people of the future. People who learn to cheat to survive. People who cannot function or direct their own lives.

I see it in my own affluent neighborhood - angry, violent *little* people. I believe it is a by-product of public schools. One week after the start of school last September, I witnessed a marked change in the 6-9 year olds. One mother said to me, "I just don't understand why she's throwing rocks at everyone all of a sudden." I replied, "She's only 6, and didn't you tell me that the first week on the bus the older kids knocked her down and took her things? I would be angry too. If you sent me back to public school, I would want to throw rocks at everyone too."

When I started thinking about homeschooling just one year ago, it was (initially) very difficult to obtain information. There was only one book on the subject at my public library. We started our support group to make it easier for families to obtain information. We send press releases to four local newspapers announcing our monthly meetings. That's how they found me to do stories on homeschooling and our support group. When reporters started calling me, I almost refused an interview. I was afraid of the publicity, afraid of calling attention to what I am doing, especially since I'm new at this. Each of the three reporters I spoke with wrote their own version. (In addition to lengthy interviews, I gave them something in writing from me - just an overview of why, how, and what we do.) I think they all did an excellent job and I wrote their editors to say they did.

We must let others know this is a viable alternative. People need to know that lots of "average" moms and dads and extended families, and single parents, are doing this — successfully, happily, wonderfully! Maybe then others will dream - dream that they, too, can do it.

Library Event

Christa Grajcar of New Jersey writes:

It is frustrating wanting so much to inform the public about homeschooling but finding that reporters chop, tailor, and twist our comments until finally we find we have not been accurately represented. By hosting meetings in the local library and inviting the public to learn about homeschooling, I have found a way to eliminate the "middle man" and speak directly to the people. This has been very satisfying and successful.

I advertised with simple posters in all the local libraries and other places where moms with young children can be found (clothing shops, YMCA, supermarket). The posters read, "What is homeschooling? All parents are invited to hear a panel of four mothers discuss homeschooling, and to have *your* questions answered." Date, time, and place. In smaller print: "Who teaches their children at home? Why and how do we do it? Is homeschooling the right choice for your family?" We also had press releases printed in local newspapers inviting all parents "who are searching for the best in education for their children" to join us at such and such date, time, and place.

Before the meeting I chose four well-spoken and experienced mothers with different methods of homeschooling. I prepared some typical questions for them, to kick off the question and answer period. I also made copies of the "General Information Packet" our support group mails out to inquirers (it includes a reading list, analysis of our state law, information on what our support group offers, etc.) as well as a response form to hand to the guests as they arrived.

My husband arrived an hour early to set up chairs and tables. One table displayed our favorite books, literature, and teaching materials for browsing.

I was a little afraid that my ads would attract school officials and public school officials who would come "disguised" as concerned parents and ask really hard questions to make us all look stupid. Nothing could have been further from the truth. The parents who came were really searching. Some had never heard of homeschooling; others were seriously considering it. They listened intently as our panelists presented their wonderful worlds of homeschooling (I was so proud of them!). When the question and answer time came I did not even need to take out my preplanned questions because the audience had plenty of their own. The discussion was friendly, fast-paced, and meaty. I could see lights going on in heads as audience members came to understand homeschooling.

At the end of the evening, I asked the audience to take a few moments to fill in the response forms and hand them in before leaving. Otherwise they could mail them in later, to my address which was on the form. This time to linger turned out to be a very good idea because members of the audience sought out the particular panelists with whom they related best, and deeper discussions arose all around the room.

According to their response forms, the guests felt the meeting was very informative, enlightening, and helpful. The only negative comment was that it was too short! (The library did give us an early curfew.) Some of the guests have since begun homeschooling! For others, it is a real possibility.

We are excited about repeating this presentation in other local libraries in the

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future. It was really simple to carry out and did not cost anything. The local library was very happy to host us. (We may try to find a place that will let us stay later.) With this format we are able to present homeschooling without the fear that our words will be altered by reporters, and being met in person goes a long way toward being accepted and understood.

Writing to Newspapers

Jeanne Ferrari-Amas of Hawaii writes:

Regarding publicity for homeschooling, I too think it's important to let the public know about home education, to erase stereotypes, and to let people know of an alternative that works. There is so much hype in the media, especially in the local newspapers, about the wonderful things that both public and private schools are doing; I think it's important that the public knows how wonderful home education is. I agree with Mali Sastri in GWS #91 that many people know nothing of homeschooling and publicity is a way of letting them know there is such a thing.

About leaving a lasting impression on someone's future decisions, you never know what influence you have, even if you just plant the seed in one person. That's how I came into home education. We lived near a family who were doing home education when my children were babies. At the time I didn't seriously think we'd be following their path!

Feeling as I do about this issue, I wrote a brief op-ed piece for a local newspaper, presenting home education as an alternative to both public and private education, presenting brief statements about socialization and where to find resources. I was told that the editor may do a story on us, so we'll see what happens. The clerk who received the article mentioned that her neighbor homeschooled for a while, and was positive about it and very nice to my children. Publicity also helps the public see you as real people, so they're not so quick to judge.

Publicity can happen on a small scale, too, in what I call the chance encounter. This is when a store clerk or librarian or anybody asks why the children aren't in school or "What school do you go to?" People I've encountered are open to the idea of home education - they're able to see the children as normal, so in these small chance encounters, publicity occurs.

Calendar

June 26, 1993: American Library Association conference in New Orleans, LA. Pat Farenga will be speaking. For info: Susan Scheps, 216-991-2421.

August 20-22: The Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education (AllPIE) conference at Deer Hill Conference Center, Wappingers Falls, NY. Sessions on public, private, and home education, parenting, educational options, involvement, and enrichment; children's activities. For info: AllPIE, PO Box 59, E Chatham NY 12060; 518-392-6900.

August 28-29: Homeschool Association of California conference at the Radisson Hotel in Sacramento. Talks by David Guterson, Thomas Armstrong, the Colfaxes, and several workshops; also, teen conference. For info: Barbara David, 916-392-8950.

August 28: Minnesota Homeschoolers' Alliance 2nd annual conference at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. For info: MHA, PO Box 23072, Richfield MN 55423; 612-491-2828.

We are happy to print announcements of major homeschooling events, but we need plenty of notice. Deadline for GWS #94 (events in September or later) is July 10th. Deadline for GWS #95 (events in November or later) is September 10th.

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You Don't Have to Be Rich...

Ideas for Homeschooling on a Low Income

From a longer letter that Judith Allee (OH) sent to Lourdes Rivas ("Low Income Family Needs Ideas," GWS #92):

I read your letter with great interest, since we also homeschool on a low income. My husband John is a freelance photographer and our taxable income has been under $10,000 a year for many years - some years way under. That's a little misleading, since by having a home business we can deduct part of our heat, car expenses, and other utilities that would be considered income if he had an outside job. Still, I know whereof you speak!

My first thought as I read your letter is that you are making things too hard on yourself. Our daughter Nancy (12) has never been to school, but this is the first year we have ever bought a textbook. (We bought a math text and a Spanish program this year.) All your boys need is great children's literature for you to read aloud to them, and there's plenty of that available free at the public library. My advice is to be very careful and selective about using any curriculum that is sent to you as a result of your letter. If it's boring or tedious, please don't impose it on your children, even though it's free.

For social studies and science you can read aloud biographies of famous people in the field of interest. (Some biographies are poorly written, so be selective.) A tip I got from another homeschooler is to read more than one biography about the same person. It's a real eye-opener, and you all get an education in not believing everything you read, since there's so much conflicting information. Your librarian can also recommend historical fiction with adults or children as the main characters.

Have you learned to use the inter-library loan system through your public library? I was amazed at all that is available. Through inter-library loan you can get almost any book you want, whether your library has it or not. ...

I haven't been able to get my library to purchase GWS, but I'm planning to try again this year. ... I hope you'll attend some of [your local support group's] meetings and field trips. The support group here is letting me pay my dues $5 at a time - it doesn't hurt to ask. I think you're much better off spending money on dues and getting the support you need and meeting kids your children can connect with than you would be spending money on curricula and supplies.

By the way, you can get free scrap paper if you ask around at printing companies and offices. You won't care if there's printing on one side, and you might luck into a variety of wonderful colored papers. Also, ask for outdated wallpaper sample books at the stores. They're lots of fun to cut up and make things with.

... Here are some of the things Nancy's gotten involved with through homeschooling:

Homeschooling is well worth some sacrifice, but I can't honestly say that I feel as if we have sacrificed very much. We're pretty rich in the stuff that matters.

She's a volunteer through the YWCA as a "Smilemaker," a program in which the volunteer calls an elderly shut-in every day for companionship and as a check to make sure they're OK. She's their first child volunteer. Once Nancy notified the Y that Mr. Riley didn't answer the phone. They sent the police, who found him unconscious and got him to the hospital.

Now she's training Mr. Riley's rambunctious dog as a 4-H project. She also used to read aloud once a week to a blind man in a nursing home until he moved to a different county.

Because Nancy was interested in collecting rocks, we joined the local rock and mineral society. Dues are $8 a year for the whole family, which includes a great monthly newsletter. We've gone on field trips and have access to experts to identify the rocks and fossils she finds. She says she is interested in becoming a paleontologist, and has read tons of books on the subject.

We organized a children's music recital every other month at a nursing home, which gave the kids a renewed interest in practicing and which the residents greatly enjoyed. (This was an idea from GWS.)

Nancy is learning about professional clowning and has attended workshops and gotten to know some professional clowns. She's also studying to become a performing magician.

We just applied for a scholarship to a children's archaeology camp sponsored by the YMCA in Cincinnati. I don't know yet if she'll get in, but this camp has kids from all over the world attending.

We've visited about twelve homeschooling families in other states through the GWS host directory - a wonderful way to meet lovely people and see other places without the cost of motels.

I'm on the mailing list (no charge) for a local university which sponsors speakers and events which are often free and open to the public. We saw Halley's comet at the observatory, met a world-famous oceanographer, met Martin Luther King's daughter Yolanda, saw a slide show on cave exploring, and have attended a monthly "Civil War Roundtable" group.

Homeschooling is well worth some sacrifice, but I can't honestly say that I feel as if we have sacrificed very much. We're pretty rich in the stuff that matters. Also, although we are low-income in a provincial sense, we certainly are not on a world-wide basis. (We've seen poverty in Mexico, and we're not living in it, believe me.)

I hope homeschooling will be as fun and rewarding for you and your family as it has been for us. My husband and I are learning all the time, and it's a real joy to have a child for whom learning is fun and exciting. We certainly can't take any credit for her inborn abilities, since Nancy was adopted at age 3 1/2 from Mexico. It is a great blessing, though, to watch her blossoming into a terrific, confident young lady.

From George Newman of Colorado:

When we lived in Bakersfield, California, I used to frequent the local college library. This school had an undergraduate program for teachers, and therefore the library had many curriculum items that could be checked out. I am not familiar with San Antonio, but you might check out this resource. Here in Colorado, any citizen can get a library card at the college library. Even if they want to charge you, see if you can talk to the head librarian and explain your situation and see what assistance he or she can give. The librarians here have been very helpful.

Here in Colorado, the state homeschooling association gets many books and other curriculum items for review.

(continued on page 28)

The Journey from School to Homeschooling

Jessica Gray of Massachusetts writes:

When I first had the desire to do homeschooling, I was in fourth grade at a public school. At that point, I had a hard time with my teacher, the children, and the ways the children were controlled and considered "less than."

Although I was a straight A and B student, I was beginning to realize that those two letters meant practically nothing in the real world. They were judgments made on one's intelligence, and ways to control kids, but they certainly didn't signify a genuinely good education. Those letters made me a "good student," but chances are that if someone were to ask me a question that I had answered correctly two or three days earlier on a test, I wouldn't know the answer. Like most kids in school who get good grades, I memorized the majority of the answers but didn't really understand them. So you can probably imagine how fearful I was of unexpected questions and pop quizzes. I love to learn, but all I was learning here was how it felt to be unhappy and oppressed and how to pretend I wasn't.

I knew about homeschooling somehow - either my mother mentioned it to me, or I had heard about it somewhere. So, I told my mother I was interested in it, and she made an appointment with the school superintendent to see what his advice was. He totally disapproved. Because of my mother's sensitivity and feelings of incapability, it didn't take much on the superintendent's part to make my mother believe that if she took me out of school, she would be destroying my social life and my education.

I unhappily continued in school, still getting good grades. My teacher was always bothered by my continuing absences. That year I missed 31 days. Staying in school was one of the hardest things I have done and, I hope, ever will do. Every day I went to this place against my true will and without the option of anything different. I was treated as though I were the same as everyone else and thought of as a job instead of a valuable, worthy individual.

Although I had friends in school, I lost a few on the way because I wasn't into the cliques and clubs that literally beat up and humiliated other people. Unfortunately, some kids needed to feel accepted so much that these clubs were safe places, for them at least. Many children don't feel accepted at home or in school. But the overall problem is that they don't accept themselves. They've never been taught how. What is more important than having self-acceptance? That in itself is not something many people in this world accomplish in a lifetime.

In fifth grade my grades continued to uphold themselves. I remember day after day 1:30 or so would come around and I'd be there, sitting at my desk with all my work completed. Because I wasn't released until 3:15, this was not a lot of fun. This happened almost every day, and sitting there for no reason became incredibly boring and pointless. The rest of the class usually had remaining work to do so it wasn't a problem for anyone else. My mom made an appointment with my teacher to discuss the problem, and my teacher's response was that the work would get more difficult later on and it would require more time.

But the time problem wasn't the only disruption I was being affected by. My disagreement with the school system still lived within me. It disturbed me that in school we're often taught that people in school know best, so they set goals for us and say that if we reach the goals successfully (by their standards) we will become good, complete human beings because we were once again controlled by society.

One day I came home from school and told my mother that I couldn't go back. That was around Thanksgiving time, and I stayed out of school for about two weeks. My mother told me one day that it was time to return. That night I went to sleep aware of the dreadful truth that I needed to return to school in the morning. That night I dreamed many dreams that all signified the way I felt: trapped with no escape. When I told this to my mother, it finally hit home for her and we had a better understanding with each other of how much this was affecting me.

Now that I know what life has to offer me, and I've learned a little more about how to appreciate life, I think it would be impossible for me to return to school. Also, I've gained a sense of pride about being a homeschooler.

That day we contacted a homeschooling group in Rhode Island. This group basically worked out of a house which held different classes for children and parents. My mother and I visited and she talked with some parents there. After some heavy thinking on the subject, and much discussion, my mother granted me permission to make my own decision about whether or not I would make the commitment to homeschooling. I thought some more about what homeschooling would require and be like, and then I decided to go for it!

After I knew that I would never again have to return to school against my will, I felt great. For the first time in a long time I felt free and so much better about who I was. I returned to school just one more day after that and it was as dreadful as the days before, but I knew it was my last. I allowed myself to recognize all of the dysfunctions and most of all I allowed myself to disagree and realize that the things that happened there really were not OK.

The school superintendent once again disapproved of our decision, but at least now it was a decision, not an idea. The disapproval did not stop us this time, for which I'm very thankful.

Even though the school was aware that I wouldn't be returning, they wanted me to keep attending until my homeschooling was official. My teacher continued to mark me absent and sent me my report card which, as you can imagine, was pretty disastrous looking. I had a friend in that class who knew I was homeschooling, and the teacher continually gave her messages to tell me and asked her questions about me. I think these actions were very inappropriate. When other classmates asked where I was, the teacher would tell them she didn't know.

Many people think that I should have appreciated school and that I wasted an opportunity that many people don't ever

have. But, the thing is, I don't appreciate being unappreciated as a person and having valuable years of my life suspended in a building when I could be seeing the world, meeting people and experiencing what life really is. Why read a book at a desk when you could be reading it outside under the stars, either in your backyard or in another part of the world?

When I left school, I realized that during my years in school I had lost something I had had when I was younger: my imagination, my dreams, and my talent for art. Art was something very special to me, but in school people are by no means encouraged to draw, imagine, or daydream. You're actually encouraged not to use these gifts. I've broken free from these beliefs after being out of school, because I've discovered that using your imagination, creating, and dreaming are life necessities. Your imagination isn't always something that can be recorded on paper like vocabulary questions and math homework, so it is considered of absolutely no importance. I totally disagree! What is a person going to do when they actually have to think about something or make an important decision or get out of a situation that is hard to handle? They're not going to know how to think, and since imagination is considered bad and not a productive tool, they're going to be pretty trapped because a natural part of their development was discouraged and stunted.

So I needed to learn again, and to allow myself to sit down with a piece of paper and draw whatever I wanted to and know that I wasn't being bad. A large portion of my life now is spent dreaming and creating, and it was hard at first, but then became natural again, because dreaming and creating *are* natural, no matter what any school official says.

I used to plan on going back to high school, partly because everyone said it would be different and I believed them. But these people also agreed with the other school systems, and I didn't. So I thought, high school may be different, but what, realistically, makes it any better? Maybe since I'd be older, the abuse would be easier to cope with. I guess there are a lot of reasons one might believe that, but now that I know what life has to offer me, and I've learned a little more about how to appreciate life, I think it would be impossible for me to return to school. Also, I've gained a sense of pride about being a homeschooler.

A woman once asked my mother how I would learn to survive in the real world if she took me out of school. It makes me laugh to think someone could ask such a question. Here is a perfect example of someone who attended traditional schools her whole life and now works at a college. She couldn't even use her common knowledge.

Here are some of the thoughts and feelings that I recorded in my journal when I first left school: "I feel whole now," "I wish people understood how I feel about school so they weren't going against me." A lot of people made judgments of me and of course my mother at this time, and sometimes it was easy to doubt myself and hard to deal with them, but I'm happy that we did homeschool. We didn't give in to society and give up our dream.

My original hopes for homeschooling were that it would allow me to be free, to grow, to expand my knowledge of what really existed in this world through my own experiences. During that first year, as we traveled the bumpy path of having to keep the school system content and carried with us my old thoughts and beliefs that education consisted of books, pens, papers, early mornings, bad food, and at least six hours of sitting at a desk, I lost the sense of what homeschooling really meant to me and what I had wanted it to be from the beginning. Out of insecurity and fear of being "not enough," I spent a whole year working with a program that was set up exactly like school. The program had many textbooks, tests, a requirement of 6-8 hours of work each day, and an incredible amount of stress. The one year I spent with this program dragged itself out to feel more like five dreadful years. I came out of that program with not much knowledge except for one valuable piece, which was that I would never put myself through that again.

For that whole year I felt like a failure because I had set myself up for failure. When I received the books and curriculum from the program at the beginning I thought they looked fun, but that's because they looked *safe*. The program was just like in school. But when it came time to meet these standards I had set up for myself out of fear, I couldn't do it - not because I didn't have the intelligence, but because it wasn't what I wanted or needed. I felt pretty miserable for a long time, and that robbed me of any remaining energy. Once again I was judged only by tests, not by the hike I took in the mountains or the research I did on a subject that meant something to me.

Obviously, this wasn't working for me. So we looked around and found something that would. Now I am 13 and enrolled in a homeschooling program that suits me perfectly. I learn the things that I choose to and a few things that I don't, but that's OK with me because it teaches me discipline. My dreams, interests, and everyday life are respected.

My mom and I travel together very often and meet many new people, which is what I love! I take dance classes at least twice a week and am preparing for a ballet which I will perform in. A lot of my time is spent with my niece, my three older sisters, and my mom. But all my time is spent learning.

Many people think homeschooling is easy or an escape from life. But it's not. I'll certainly admit that homeschooling is much more difficult than school, but not in a bad way. I've learned to trust myself, to believe in myself, and I've learned self-discipline, self-acceptance, and how to dream, which is more than most people do in a lifetime, but I've also realized that not all wisdom and knowledge can possibly be written on a piece of paper but instead resides within me. It is unlikely that I could tell you how much homeschooling has done for me besides saying that it has helped me appreciate life and the entire universe. Every hard time I went through and continue to go through has worked out for the best and I wouldn't ask for it any other way.

My dreams continue to be very abundant, as they will be forever. I swear that I sometimes drive Mom crazy with all of them, but she has never done anything but encourage me to continue and teach me how to make them come true. I'd like to thank her for that, and for believing in me when I didn't and even when I did, for being in my life to grow and change with even when it got hard. We've done a lot of yelling at each other and crying together as well as a lot of laughing and apologizing. I look forward to the rest of our pleasant as well as not-so-pleasant encounters because we learn and grow from them all.

One of my biggest dreams is to travel all around the world, and with my persistence and some help from Mom, this dream is already becoming a reality. I once explained to my mother that I sat in a classroom that I outgrew, so I came home to learn because it allowed me more space, and now I turn to the world, to the many places there are to travel to. In a year or so we are planning on selling our house and traveling around the country. That may sound crazy to some people, but we feel it is time for a change, and why not make our dream come true? The small, quiet town we moved to eleven years ago has developed into a large house lot. The streets are no longer safe to walk and the pollution smells in the air. It doesn't suit our lives anymore, and since my mother's chosen occupation is one she can travel with, it makes sense for us to go.

Being a homeschooler often makes me a minority in this world, so I've learned to believe in myself a little more and that's built me great character. I certainly stand behind homeschooling and encourage people to do it. Feel the power that you have to make a difference in your life, and remember how to dream!

For more on going from school to homeschooling, see GWS #76 - #80, #86, #91.

Challenges & Concerns

How Homeschoolers Can Get Along

Becky Loven of Maryland writes:

In answer to Victoria Moran ("Getting Along When Philosophies Differ," GWS #92): I am an unschooling fundamentalist Christian. I, as usual, found myself uncomfortable when I read your statement that "almost all homeschoolers here are fundamentalist Christians and basically do 'school at home.'" I really think it is a shame that certain educational philosophies are being lumped together with certain spiritual beliefs when the two are really entirely different issues. Unschooling Christians and "school at home" people who are not Christians do exist. Though you are asking about two different issues, educational philosophy and spiritual beliefs, I feel the key to both is respecting others with different beliefs, and expecting the same in return.

Being unstructured, and dealing with more structured homeschoolers, I have found my children can, of course, become friends with these children from families with a more structured style. Even those with a structured style take days off to spend time with other homeschoolers, though you might have to do some advance planning to schedule it. Field trips are another group activity in which all homeschoolers are interested.

I should mention that I have seen many of my structured friends become much less structured as the years go by. I don't know if this is a typical phenomenon (I hear it is) or if perhaps exposure to unschoolers (such as myself and yourself!) might speed up this process. This seems to be a nice side benefit to these relationships.

Regarding your interest in environmentalism and ecology, there are many Christians who are just as committed to saving the earth as you yourself are. The only problem might come if a Christian felt you were coming on forcefully with spiritual beliefs in conflict with their own, and which are sometimes connected with environmentalism, such as worship of nature.

This leads me to the next issue: spiritual beliefs. You would not want a Christian friend to lie about their beliefs or pretend to be what they are not. Why should *you* do so? If you believe a certain way, say so, whether it involves religion or politics. I feel the key is respect from both parties for each other's beliefs. You would not appreciate someone's heavily preaching their beliefs to your child. Nor would a Christian appreciate your doing this to their child. However, you would also expect a Christian friend to be honest with you about their beliefs, and not to hide religious artwork or books in their home when you visit. Neither should you do so. Your statement that you are "careful not to overstep what [you] understand to be [the child's] family's beliefs" shows you do respect others' beliefs, and you should expect reciprocal treatment from your friends, no matter what their educational philosophy or spiritual beliefs.

If we as homeschoolers can focus on what we have in common, the love and nurturance we feel and exhibit toward our children, we can be friends. We might not be as close as friends who have the same educational philosophy or spiritual beliefs, but isn't that OK?

As you pointed out, homeschooled kids are wonderfully alike because of the homeschooling, not necessarily because of the family's educational or spiritual stance. Diversity is part of the strength of any successful movement. Let's be careful not to let division weaken our unity.

Teased by Friends

Sherry O'Shea of Oregon writes:

My 14-year-old son has just begun homeschooling about a month and a half ago. We were initially inspired by *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* and then moved on to back issues of GWS and any other resource book we could get our hands on. The immediate warmth and acceptance I felt both in the reading of GWS issues and in the telephone contacts in our area has encouraged me to write this letter asking for some support.

John (my son) and I are very excited about having him be in charge of his own education, but would like some feedback on specific issues. John is already very busy even though he says he is still in "vacation" mode. He works part-time at my sister's daycare center (he has been doing this off and on since he was 12), spending a few hours a week at a friend's bike shop (mostly sweeping, etc.), attends an advanced radio broadcasting class at the local high school, and snowboards whenever possible.

However, he is having to endure teasing from some of his friends along the lines of, "You'll just be a bum if you homeschool - you can't get into college," etc. I realize from reading back issues of GWS that this is not an uncommon occurrence stemming mostly from lack of information. The positive aspect is that it has opened up many opportunities between John and myself (I am a single parent) to talk about what this is all about, what friendship means, how to respond to negative comments, and many other subjects. John has also expressed some feelings of isolation as he struggles to adapt. He is feeling too shy to write a letter himself asking for feedback from other teens. With his permission I am asking for feedback both from parents of homeschooled teens and from teens who may wish to send a note of support to John. We are also very interested in networking with teens who may be visiting in our area. We would love to meet you.

Choosing School

Alma Moon Novotny of Texas writes:

In response to Susan Defosset's letter in GWS #91 about children choosing school: John Holt addressed this issue, pointing out that a child who decides on formal schooling after having been offered homeschooling lives and learns in a completely different ethical and intellectual framework from a child who is compelled to go to that same school. I also recall a letter to GWS from a woman who had compelled an unwilling daughter to homeschool and was experiencing a variety of problems as a result. I think you could possibly insist that a child homeschool for a period in order to make sure the child was making an informed decision, but your position should be one of providing the child with a real choice, not removing the choice. But, given a happy and developing child, I would think twice about fixing things that aren't broken.

My two sons, now 16 and 12, have attended a variety of schools for most of their lives, and their experiences have been generally, but not entirely, positive. We have been helped in dealing with the negatives by knowing we have alternatives. In fact, the local system made a significant improvement in the environment of one of my sons after I informed the administration that if they couldn't do a better job, I would. Of course, thanks to

GWS it was not an idle threat.

And one more idea: it is even possible to homeschool in school! Because of the absurd workload dumped on her, one of my son's teachers was unable to individualize his reading instruction. That year, I taught his reading by negotiating a work plan with him that he could do independently during his reading period at school. At the end of the year, his standardized test scores were superb, but his own personal evaluation was that, while he enjoyed some of the freedom, he preferred to be in a group. If it hadn't been for John Holt, I would have perceived this as a personal criticism instead of the legitimate choice it was.

Barbara Nye (VT) writes:

Jeremy (17) chose to go to school this year and will graduate after one year of public school. He ended up taking mostly junior honors classes because they weren't sure where to place him since he'd never taken any tests. The counselor told him if he did well, he could graduate; if not, he'd have to go one more year. And he has done well, getting high (90-95 average) or highest (95-100 average) honors.

It has been good for him to see what organized learning is like and good for the teachers to see how willing a homeschooled child is to learn. In his English journal he expounds on the futility of the repetitive schooling and I believe he has made some of the teachers realize some of the harm schooling can do, but the teachers cannot or will not change. His English teacher wants him to talk at some of the educational reform meetings. They still think he is an exception. I will write to his English teacher to tell him Jeremy is not an exception among homeschoolers. Most, or all, homeschoolers are not burned out on learning.

Jeremy hates the atmosphere of school so much, I'm wondering if college is a consideration at this point. He hates the arrogant attitude of some of the teachers, the apathy of the students, and the continuous homework. His younger sister, Cameran, will go to school next year as a sophomore. Jeremy told her, shaking his head dejectedly, that she should go to school for one year to see how most of the children of the U.S. spend their time. She has no qualms about going. She's only going to be among the children she met through skiing and snowboarding this year, and if she doesn't like it, she'll quit. She doesn't care if she gets on the honor roll, although Jeremy told her that if she listens to the teacher and does what the teacher says, she'll get all A's because most of the students don't listen and just gab with each other. Cameran is not up to grade level in math, doing most of her math on her fingers, and she just recently taught herself cursive since her printing looks very childish. She is a great reader and learns fast when she's interested in something, and since she wants to be up to her peers' level, it'll be interesting to see how she does. What is important to me is that she not get discouraged about her ability to learn, if she has a class or teacher that is above her level.

Nicole Tergeoglou (HI) writes:

Last spring we moved onto our land in a different part of the island. Up until this time my daughter, Ariel (10), had expressed no desire to go to school in the area we had lived in for the previous eight years. In the few months prior to our move, though, she began talking about possibly going to school in the new place, something our family was totally unprepared for. She ultimately chose to go to school for the fifth grade - after she had met the teacher (she requested to do this before making the final decision).

Well, of course what I had hoped for was that after a couple of weeks she would burn out and choose to stay home. I was completely wrong. She loved school! We missed her terribly. It was very strange for all of us (including her two brothers) to watch her go off every weekday at 7 in the morning, come home at 2:30 and sit down to a couple of hours of homework. She was very suddenly not part of our daily lives (my husband and I both work part-time and are home working on our place a great deal). Here was a child who has never liked being told what to do, who has always been in charge of her own time, absolutely revelling in having a structure, a routine, somewhere to go every morning. She was quite happy.

I became resigned and tried to adjust to the idea that she might very well choose to go to school for the next seven years. It was difficult to accept because the losses were becoming apparent. She no longer had time or energy to draw (something she's done daily since she could hold a pencil - she's a wonderful artist) or read, and she no longer had time for us. I could also see her getting tired and frustrated over getting homework done in time, and I made her stay home a few times just to rest. It's a grueling schedule, this school business. Being a very conscientious person, she was determined always to have everything done on time, though together we decided that sometimes it just wouldn't get done and it was OK. (She also realized that other kids didn't finish their homework.) I was very straightforward with her teacher about our philosophy of unschooling, and she listened, though she strongly believes that very few parents are qualified to teach their children.

I have to add that the teacher was totally impressed by Ariel, both by her social and academic behavior, and she kept telling us what a wonderful influence and example she was to the class and how happy she (the teacher) was that she had chosen to go to school. Ariel did do well, and she likes the kids and they like her, so she feels more at home in this area as a result.

Then came Christmas vacation, and by the time school started again in January it was clear the glow had faded. Ariel no longer loved school. It had become a grind. Getting up in the dark, having long hours of homework, sitting all day, being rushed through assignments and projects - all of this was no longer very appealing. Again I was unprepared when she told me one day she had decided not to go to school next year. I didn't want to appear too excited (though she knows exactly how I feel) because I know it is a decision that could change, but she appears to be sticking with it and has told others, including her teacher.

I feel that overall the experience has been a positive one, though I wouldn't push it on any child who didn't want to go to school. Ariel wanted to know what school was like and she wanted to meet more kids. I would not have let her go if she had not been reading (she was almost 9 when her reading clicked) - too much damage can be done in that case, I feel. I would not let her younger brothers go for the same reason (they have no desire to, anyway, and I think their sister's experience has only reinforced that).

I know that she may well decide to go back to school in the future, depending on what else is happening for her in terms of friends and activities. Perhaps the school will allow homeschoolers to participate part time. We are also close friends with another unschooling family in the neighborhood, and this had a positive influence on Ariel choosing to stay home.

Ariel adds:

Like my mom said, at first I thought school was wonderful. When I first decided to go, it was mostly because of the need for friends. When I started reading, I was reading *The Babysitters' Club*, and in those books they went to school and they did plays and stuff in school. I thought that elementary school must have plays too (I love acting) so that was one of the reasons for school - it would have stuff to do that's not boring.

Well, I was very wrong. If you asked most of the kids in school what their favorite word was, it would probably be the word "boring." In the elementary school they have no plays. It was very discouraging when I found out about it. But out of school I'm going to start going to an acting-dance class. I think it will be very fun and not so boring.

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When Children Resist Teaching

These writers are responding to Karen Price Herman's letter, "She Resists Teaching," in GWS #92.

Curriculum Didn't Work

From Tammy Billeci (CA):

My son Joseph is almost 7, and he's never been to school. Kindergarten at home was a real struggle because (having attended public school exclusively) I wanted to try to teach my way. I purchased the A Beka Book curriculum but it just didn't work (no offense to A Beka). It did not fit Joseph's style of learning at all. He resisted everything, although he was still learning along the way. I was totally committed to homeschooling, so it was scary because I didn't want things to go on as they were. Over time I had been reading John Holt's books and other materials, and they all made so much sense. But as I mentioned, I was taught in public school, and it's difficult to break away from that method. What I think would be really exciting, Joseph will take no part in.

First grade rolled around and foolishly I purchased another stack of curriculum materials. Now it sits on the bookshelf unused. The best books I ever purchased were anything written by John Holt and another one called *Free At Last* by Daniel Greenberg. John Holt has saved my sanity. My advice to Karen is to go with John Holt's ideas and let Peri do the rest. Joseph and I are much happier now that I've let him make the choices, and I know he's learning when he plays with his Legos all day or just rides his bike half the afternoon.

I also feel better after reading Karen's letter because I used to feel like I was the only one who had a child who resisted school. When I read her letter I said, "That sounds just like Joseph. I'd better respond!"

Mother is Worried

Nancy McBrayer of New Mexico writes:

I have an 11-year-old daughter who resists direction and instruction. She is our only child. When Summer was 7 and we were first homeschooling, I didn't worry as much as I do now. She was still a novice student, we were novice homeschoolers. I thought at least some of her attitude had to be the effect of her public school experience.

It took three more years to make the break from public school. During that time I've learned a lot about how children learn and how schools try to teach. I have learned through reading and observation that children cannot be kept from learning. We cannot always tell what is being learned, and it is not always the task at hand. The child having difficulty with mulitiplication just might be learning she is no good at math.

I took Summer out of school ultimately because she wasn't really learning to read. We have spent hours and hours this winter reading. For a while we read out loud. I tried reading articles in magazines that I thought would interest her. I had her read to me. I have assigned books to be read and then written about. She resisted all of that. Her reading has developed into reading to herself the books of her choice and for as long as she wants to read. She's read about 100 Babysitter's Clubs and a few Nancy Drews, and at times I worry. Just lately she's begun to look for different stories. The subject is still children about her age. She has done a few book reports and a few information reports assigned by her dad, but she hasn't done the one a week for a semester that would make me feel like we are working on something. What has happened is that Summer wants to tell me about what she has read. I have to laugh at myself because sometimes I have to force myself to listen! It has been so subtle and really so effortless to allow Summer to improve her reading.

So, now what? The kid can read. I thought by now she'd be developing some interests and her self-directed learning would begin. That hasn't happened. Summer has no curiosity. It's not that she's not interested in anything, she's just not interested in studying anything. She likes to use tools, to build things. She loves math. She draws a little bit. She'll write a little bit. She just doesn't work at anything for very long. What is she learning? In my stronger periods I know she is learning to know herself. In my weaker times I'm afraid she is only learning to do what's easiest. Arguing is the easiest of all. I won't argue and fight her to get her to do what I think she should be doing.

Recently Summer decided she wanted an allowance. We've tried this before and have quit when chores became something for Mom to nag about. This time has been different. I may have to remind her but I refuse to harp. Summer knows this. She has gotten tired of hearing me nag and is a lot more willing. Even if she delays her work, we are all confident she will get it done. If she doesn't, she loses the money or her TV time. I think she just had to grow up some before she was ready to take full responsibility for her chores.

Something that may have helped teach Summer responsibility for her actions: I have long hair. Summer wanted long hair. For quite a long time we fought over brushing and washing. I finally quit fighting about it. Summer took to wearing her hair in a pony tail. She would still wash it but eventually she realized that her hair was out of control. She decided to allow me to cut it off. We let the local hair dresser even it out and now she has control of her coif.

These kinds of everyday situations can lead a child to an independently made decision, but a child doesn't have the forethought to work now to benefit her future. I have read letters from parents who have had the patience to allow their children to learn to read when they were ready, even if the children didn't read until 11 or 12 or older. Do I have that kind of situation with my child? When she's 14 or 16 will she suddenly become interested in history, be ready to make a commitment to science? Will she want to be knowledgeable about something? How long has anyone else allowed their child to resist teaching?

Fiercely Independent

Julie Scandora (WA) writes:

Karen Price Herman's daughter Peri sounds just like our middle child, Rikki, age 8. She is fiercely independent, especially in learning. In her Montessori preschool, she was quite happy to pace herself as long as she was allowed to free choose her work. When she entered another Montessori school for first grade and was required to spend specified time on reading, spelling, math, etc., her enthusiasm suddenly dropped. When I began homeschooling her the following year, I had to step back. She was absolutely resistant to any efforts to teach her. I felt that year was for me – to learn how to let Rikki take charge of her education, to realize that she would learn what was important to her, and to believe that this would be more than sufficient.

When given the freedom she demands, Rikki does superbly. She is an excellent artist and a prolific reader, extremely creative, inquisitive, well-coordinated, fearless, and self-confident. She did spend much of that first year in hands-on activities of her own creation, to the exclusion of academics. I feel she needed to be well grounded in the physical world. (Some authorities even say it's best not to read until age 8.) And she needed to feel both confident in herself and secure in my estimation of her ability to handle her learning schedule. Once she felt I believed in her, our relationship - which had often been at odds - greatly improved. With that, so did her willingness to cooperate. Still resistant to being taught, she nevertheless is perfectly capable of learning whatever she wants in whichever way she prefers.

For instance, she periodically plays school with younger friends. She is the teacher and gives math and other exercises to her students. I feel this is her way of becoming more comfortable with the subject.

I will say that all this standing aside is not easy for me. I am often too critical, have always done well in math, and have a husband who is less than supportive of homeschooling. It takes much restraint not to harp on Rikki about her merely basic proficiency in math. I keep wanting her to learn because *I* think she should. Fortunately, Rikki is quick to let me know when I forget to honor her chosen learning method and individual timetable. But staying out of her way does get easier with time and patience.

It is important to remember that we have time on our side. In a classroom where today's lesson builds on yesterday's and tomorrow's on today's, the child quickly becomes lost if one lesson doesn't click. All future ones then become meaningless. In homeschooling, the child can learn when she is ready. There's no need to rush; you have time. I am continually impressed by other children whose parents write to GWS. Subjects (especially math and reading) avoided for years are suddenly picked up and learned in a relatively short time. Despite outside pressure, learning to read at age 6 is not what's important. Given our confidence in the child, she will learn when she is ready. The end result will be a self-assured and reading adult. And that is important.

Respect the child and believe that she will learn; she will be more than ready to go forward. And her cooperation in other matters such as housekeeping will greatly improve. If nothing else, Rikki has taught me to trust the child. Do!

Adjust Expectations

Wanda Rezac (MA) sent us a copy of a letter she wrote to Karen:

I read your letter about Peri in GWS yesterday, and wanted to respond from my point of view. We have five children, ages 7 to 18, and have been homeschooling for ten or eleven years now. ... When I first read your letter I formed a vague mental picture of you and Peri sitting on the couch talking. The only problem was that I assumed Peri was around 14 or 15, so I did a mental double-take when I found out she was only 7. Having had five 7 year olds I think you are experiencing what every mother experiences with her first (and usually second) child. You are expecting too much of her, not knowing that most of the things you so strongly want to see in Peri will come naturally in a year or two of their own accord.

If I walk into the sunroom and find it a total mess because the kids have invented/played some elaborate game in there, I know that I will have no problem getting it all picked up - except for David's share (he's my 7 year old). He may cooperate or he may balk, complain, argue, etc. If his share is pretty substantial, I know that I need to pitch in to help get it done. I've found that 7 year olds will agree (beforehand) to clean up any mess, but after the fact can be overwhelmed by the job, or simply too balky and stubborn to keep those agreements. We have a general operating assumption in our house that if you make a mess, you should be the one to clean it up. Age 5 to 7 is when I start to expect cooperation on this. By 9 or 10 I find the kids will be more than willing to clean up their own messes, but that they won't do a thorough job unless I point out what they've missed. If there are two or more kids, they're likely to argue about whose share of the mess has been cleaned up. When they're around 11 or so, you're

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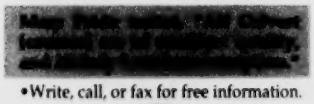

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home free, and around 16-18 your bread will come back to you buttered. My older kids are now (on occasion) cleaning up the kitchen for me, offering to cook dinner, stepping in to settle squabbles between the younger kids, and generally turning out to be delightful, cooperative, helpful adults. It's a much longer waiting game than you expect when you start out.

As far as the academics are concerned, I found that the same thing was true. I had to adjust my expectations and trust my children. I don't know if you are using a curriculum, or have specific goals for Peri at her age. I strongly believe that it is the natural job of younger children to simply explore, experience, and live in the world as it comes to them and absorb as much of it as they can for ten years or so. I wouldn't even worry about "academics" until at least 11 or 12. I stopped using any curriculum or formal schooling about eight years ago, and our third and fourth children learned to read somewhere around 9 or 10 years. My husband and I decided to give California Achievement Tests this year for the heck of it, and I've been amazed at how well my 10 year old is reading. He just started sounding out simple words a year ago, and I have no doubt that he will test above grade level this year.

All their math has come from managing their own money, playing Monopoly, Bridge, etc. Don't worry. It will come. Penny Barker (OH) has a tape on Later Literacy which is very good. She talks about the valuable things kids learn in those years before they start to read and approach life from an academic point of view.

It is said that kids live up to our epectations of them. If we doubt them, that is the expectation they sense coming from us, and it's tough for them to overcome that doubt. One of the most helpful things for me was knowing families with older children who had grown up without any academic pressures and yet turned out to be competent adults. There were many years when I couldn't see any progress in my own kids, and I just kept focused on these teenagers and their success. It gave me enough hope to stick to what I believed, when I might have given up otherwise. Try to get to know some unschoolers with older (even much older) kids. It will help you to keep things in perspective.

About your "biased tirade." I don't want to pick on you. We've certainly all had similar conversations with our kids. But - you basically told Peri that if she follows her natural, inherent approach to learning about her world, she will be less successful than if she goes the traditional route. I don't think you really believe that, but on occasion you're afraid it's true. Believe me, I know the feeling, and maybe my story will help you to overcome that fear.

My oldest is now 18. When he was 9 we stopped thinking in terms of "learning" and just let him live. At that point he could read at about a first grade level, and do simple arithmetic. For the next five years he basically played. In the process he learned to read quite well, but never bothered to do much more writing than necessary (filling out catalog order forms for things he wanted or filling out applications to join the Boy's Club so he could play basketball). Math? He handled his own money, played lots of games like Monopoly, and basically knew how numbers worked, but never wanted to learn the formalities and nomenclature of long division, fractions, etc. He never learned cursive.

At 14 he decided he wanted to go to public high school in order to play organized basketball. The summer before he entered, I wanted to "bring him up to grade level," but he wasn't interested. He finally told me to quit pressuring him, that he would learn what he needed to when he went to school. I saw that I had fear that he would fail, whereas he had confidence that he could succeed. We sent him off to school with, needless to say, very mixed feelings. My husband (an engineer) was afraid his chances of preparing for a high-tech career might have been ruined. Instead, we found that his exploration of the world was the perfect preparation for high school. In the college prep classes, the teachers ran a quick review for the first week or so. Anything Ron didn't know, he quickly picked up in those weeks. Because he already knew how numbers worked and related, the math nomenclature was easy and made sense. Writing was more of a challenge. For the first two semesters, he asked me to check all his homework for spelling and punctuation. Believe me, his spelling was atrocious. However, he made all A's, and even got a faculty award in English his sophomore year. His writing was never very good by my standards, and this year he chose to take a college writing course to improve his writing. He's a very adequate writer now. The drive to be competent was reliable. It just didn't kick in till 12th grade for him in this subject.

His high school career has been a resounding success. As a senior, he is currently taking the Freshman College level classes at an engineering school as part of a state program for gifted children in math and science. He scored a perfect score on his PSAT math, and has three full-tuition scholarship offers for college to choose from. If you were to ask him what the biggest contributing factor has been, he would say it was being left completely alone for all those years. He was never forced to learn something he didn't want to, so he had true interest when he did decide to learn something. He had plenty of time to wonder about and experiment with the things that were of interest to him.

We were talking one day about teens and self-esteem in general, and he made the comment that he can never remember a time when he actually believed he was stupid. That impressed me. As a student in school, I know one of my biggest motivations to do well was the fear that perhaps I was stupid.

Incidentally, he never did learn to write cursive. To this day he can only write his signature in cursive, and his printed letters are written from bottom up (often a curiosity to his classmates).

Obviously, not all kids are going to go this route. I have 16- and 13-year-old daughters who have no interest in an academic approach to life at all, and who are pouring their energies into horsemanship, learning to ride, teach, buy, and sell horses. The 16 year old plans to make a career out of it. However, I have no doubt that if she suddenly changed her mind and decided she wanted to become a rocket scientist, she would have no problem doing so, even at this "late date." Knowing how to reason and learn is something that is eminently transferable.

I am realizing just this year how incredibly important conversation is to learning. Often when we come across something curious in our lives we will discuss it together. None of us may have answers in the formal sense, but together we will wonder, speculate, challenge theories, pull in the facts we know that relate to the subject at hand and see how they might fit, and generally explore the topic. Over the past year I've been realizing that these family discussions may have been some of the best learning experiences my kids have ever had. That's where they've learned to reason, question, and think, and have their curiosity respected and nourished. I'd say, pay attention to and enjoy the questions, and don't worry about the rest!

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Watching Children Learn

Museums Inspire Activities

[SS:] Salinda Tittsworth of Maryland told us that her son, Patrick Roof (13), and two other homeschooled friends, Eoin Fitzpatrick (12) and Jim Williford (11), designed a working model of a magnetic levitation commuter train. They were participating in an engineering challenge sponsored by The American Society of Highway Engineers, The Baltimore Museum of Industry, and The Engineering Society of Baltimore. The three boys ended up placing first in the contest, and Salinda writes that the judge noted that the boys were homeschooled.

Salinda enclosed a paper that Patrick wrote about the boys' work on the project. Some excerpts:

The first time we met we discussed what our team logo would be. We didn't come to a real conclusion on that. The same day, we went to the library to research references and articles on magnetism, superconductivity, and magnetic-levitation trains already in operation. ["Mag-lev" trains use magnets to float along the track.]

At our second meeting we met a physics teacher who would help us with our project. His name is Mr. Howard White. At his house we discussed magnetism in general and how it works. On our second visit, we made a scale drawing of what our model would look like. We each had a different design. A vote would later help us decide whose design would be picked. Eoin's design was chosen. Then we discussed the materials we would need to make the model. We also tested the propulsion motor using a six volt cell. The motor ran well.

The next week, Jim, Eoin, Mr. White, and I went to the Baltimore Museum of Industry to see the track. ... It was shaped like a "U" with two rows of magnets in the bottom. The model would sit in the "U" and the walls of the track would retain the car. We knew our objective was to make three runs down the track and the times would be averaged and would compete with other teams and their models.

Here's a basic summary of the things each of us were assigned to do:

• Jim had the job of making a floor plan for the interior. He made a mock-up of the inside of the model in a shoe box. Jim also did scale drawings and designed our logo.

• Eoin designed the body of the car and the method of connecting the engine contacts to the track. He tried to copy the shape of modern cars for aerodynamics.

• And I, Patrick, was in charge of writing this report.

... Here are some problems we had with our project and how we solved them. Jim had the job of designing the interior. A problem he had was getting the seats to stand up. Mr. White helped him find an answer. He glued the seats so that they were sticking out of the wall. Then, there is an "L"-shaped board sticking down from the seat to the floor. Eoin ran into this block: giving the propellor clearance. The motor needs to be up high so the propellor can clear the train, but a tall tower would make the car top-heavy. So Eoin got the idea to add a stabilizing fin to the top of the tower.

Jim had lots of design ideas for types of cars like the family car, the movie car, and the dining car. He also worked on the problem of moving from car to car while in transit. We decided to focus on the car being used for commuting instead of long distances, and we tried to imagine how it would feel as a passenger riding at such high speeds. That got us comparing riding in a jet to riding on a regular train. Jim came up with a floor plan with seating for 45 passengers, seatbelts, and a bathroom.

Jacob Richman (PA) writes:

On one of our trips last fall we visited the Museum of Scientific Discovery and the Franklin Institute. Both of these museums had a little device with rubber bands suspended in between two wheels, one of which you could turn, rotating the rubber bands to make a hyperboloid. (A hyperboloid is a three-dimensional shape. To get an idea of what it looks like, think of squeezing a cylindrical pillow in its middle.)

When we got home from that trip I wrote a computer program simulating it and other mathematically interesting geometric displays I had been impressed with on the trip. When I see an interesting geometric design, I want to try to make it on the computer - I want to see if I can make it. I enjoy programming; if I didn't, I probably wouldn't have written over 1000 computer programs on my own.

I wrote a letter to the Museum of Scientific Discovery telling them about my program. In my letter I had a bunch of sample program runs printed out and the program listing of my program. Gregg Rice, Exhibits Director of the museum, sent me a friendly letter saying that they would like to put my program in the exhibit. They asked when I would be in the Harrisburg area next, as they would like me to come over to the museum to work with the staff.

Last spring, when my family was on another trip, we found time to visit the Museum of Scientific Discovery. When I got there Gregg Rice started to work with me on making the program more child-proof - i.e., making it harder for a child to crash the program. We also tried to make running it simpler and more self-explanatory so people not familiar with computers could use it. I showed Gregg how to load and run the program. We also made changes to maximize the size of the crank and the rubber bands made by the program for VGA hi resolution mode. At our house at that time my computer was hooked up to a monochrome monitor. To make the program look good I had to change it so it could be used on a VGA color monitor instead.

It was fun to see how an exhibit is put together at a small museum, and I'm glad I did it.

Older Reader Now Interested in Academics

Susan Evans (MI) writes:

My oldest son, Luke, who's 15, was a nonreader until he was 12, and had no interest at all in anything that smelled academic until this year. Now he wants to go to the Air Force Academy, and I think I've hit on a great way to give him a solid background in math and science, using Saxon Math and Boy Scout Merit Badges (all hands-on, practical activities). English, history, art, and music are a part of our lives. He's excited about James Michener books as a painless way to organize world and American history.

I expect my in-laws will say, "Why didn't you just do this years ago?" They miss the point that *he* asked me to put this together to meet *his* goal. He's been busy all these years building a framework for all this information he's seeking. He can see how aviation relates to zoology to calculus to Renaissance art. He has also developed tremendous leadership skills - he has intuitive skills in seeing the world through another's eyes and deciphering that person's motivation. He then can elicit what that person wants to accomplish, and help him or her figure out how to get there.

These skills have become apparent in the positions he has held in his Boy Scout troop and Civil Air Patrol squadron, but I think he developed them in the time he spent not reading, not doing math, not diagramming sentences. The "pay-off time" of unschooling is coming much earlier than I expected.

Nurturing the Wild

Penny Barker (OH) writes:

People ask whether it was my husband, Richard, or I who had such negative school experiences that we decided to keep our own five out of the system. Of the two of us, I had the less traumatic schooling; I went to the same one-room schoolhouse in rural Missouri that my mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother attended before me. Richard attended Catholic schools in northern California where he caused the nuns some pain (he'd probably be called hyperactive in today's classroom) but smoothed out his educational career in England, receiving his university degree from the hands of Princess Margaret herself. Neither of us looks back to our school experience with either dread or fondness, but rather as a time of tedium. Through much discussion in the beginning years of our marriage we realized how school and parents can almost unknowingly squelch, suppress, and discourage the adventurous and courageous natures we possess as children.

Even though Richard and I both have great respect for our own upbringing, this aspect of childrearing would be one we watched and cared for more carefully than our own parents had done. Thus, "nurturing the wild" became the very warp of our curriculum upon which our children have woven their various interests and talents. In looking back over 17 years of homeschooling and 24 years of childrearing we now realize what a strong underlayment this has been for our children, all very different from one another.

We were pleased when our oldest, Britt, took the first adventurous leap out of the family at age 16 to travel by train alone to meet up with Aleta Karstad and travel with her and her husband, Fred Schueler, across the wilds of Canada. We nodded approvingly at her flying trips to Italy, India, and Central America, even when we knew there were risks involved. Her love for flying developed during these trips which eventually led to her desire to pilot herself in the air. It was during one of her solo cross-country trips just before she acquired her private license that Britt met her husband, Grant Mariner. In Britt's own words from a letter of February '91: "My flight plan was to the east, I'd drawn it up carefully but once in the air - my soul passionately exalting in the sky - a voice very clear, compelling, shouting took over the controls of my craft. It was west I flew, unplanned, compelled. Twenty minutes later I made radio contact with someone on the ground at a small airfield and cleared for landing. And there was Grant, to bridge my return from the sky, that voice over the radio was now blocking the wheels of my craft - I knew immediately that some wild something inside me had brought me to exactly where I needed to be."

Nurturing the wild in our second child, Maggie, showed itself strongly this winter, and I thought about it consciously as Richard, our youngest, Jonah, and I watched little Maggie drive off down the snowy road in her one-ton truck with three dogsleds atop it and 26 dogs loaded inside on a -32 degree morning headed for the Canada-Minnesota border.

Two times in the last month I've seen the wild in Maggie meet and mix with the wild of her world. In racing a hundred miles on a steep, narrow, winding trail at night, Maggie's sled brake broke. Her dogs were going 22 mph on this icy trail, and Maggie could only drag her feet to hold the dogs back a little, but very little since she weighs only 106 pounds. When she pulled into the first checkpoint after 45 miles she was trembling from the effort of holding her sled back but was ready to meet whatever the trail still held for her. After Richard repaired her brake, she headed out for the last 55 miles of the race, arriving at 7 AM to receive the $3000 first place prize for her wild ride through the night.

Two weeks later she raced ninety miles, beginning at midnight, with temperatures at -20 degrees. She lost the trail on the Bay de Noc because of trouble with her headlamp. She spent an hour lost on the dark bay, climbing over mountainous buckles of ice with her dogs while the black bay ice popped and boomed all around her. She made the decision to trust in her leaders, dogs she'd raised and trained from birth, and they faithfully carried her to land and a first place finish rather than out to the open waters of Lake Michigan that lay not far beyond.

Nurturing the wild in Dan, our third child, has caused consternation, not so much for him as for his cello professor who implores Dan to attend the Cleveland Institute of Music or Oberlin Conservatory or Curtis Institute next fall because of his extremely refined interpretive skills. Dan, instead, insists on heading out to Montana where he can study cello in a lower-key way and have the time and space to kayak, canoe, backpack, and dogsled - all so important, he feels, to his balance as a whole person. Dan told his professor, "Unless I can get back to those things that are so important to me, I will lose touch with that inside myself that enables me to have these talents you revere." I think Dan's probably right.

Sometimes the wild simply bursts forth after seeming dormant, as it did in Ben, our fourth, recently. After our return from kayaking the Salmon River in Idaho and the Green River in Utah, Ben settled down at his desk for some serious work at writing, spelling, usage, and grammar for two months. I was very surprised because he'd never shown an interest in this kind of thing and in fact always resisted my overtures in this direction. I had decided that Ben might be the one of my children who would need to send tapes to us instead of writing letters home since his skills in that area were so weak. (Britt had actually been the one to suggest cassette tapes rather than worrying him with skills that didn't seem to be coming forth readily.) In eight weeks this 16 year old took himself from being a very weak writer to being extremely proficient. Then the wild in Ben demanded fulfillment. Shortly after this, he headed out on a Greyhound bus to travel 2100 miles to El Paso, Texas to meet up with six young people aged 18 to 25 to canoe the Rio Grande River and backpack in the Chisos Mountains along the Tex-Mex border.

In the meantime my youngest, Jonah (14), borders on wild*ness*. He told me yesterday of following along behind a wolf for a long time on his snowmachine. He then pulled carefully alongside it to observe more closely, and then moved quickly ahead so that the creature would not feel the need to leave the path and flounder in the five feet of snow surrounding the trail. The problem is that when Jonah is not searching out otters (as I described in GWS #88), observing wolves, or exploring trails by moonlight, he is off at a village twelve miles away "jumping ice breaks" with the local snowmobile lads. For me this borders on wildness rather than wild. When Susannah and I were first dialoguing about the "wild," she asked me what I meant by wild*ness* in connection with Jonah. I glibly told her that it simply meant Jonah's worldview was much broader than mine. But in her thought-provoking way, she asked for further clarification, and I had to dig deep to make it clear to myself what I actually did mean. I finally figured out that "wild" for me indicates a relationship with nature that borders on the dangerous edge between survival and non-survival. When I label something "wildness," it still involves the same relationship with the natural world, but with the added factor of observers and their reactions present. This means that I worry that when Jonah is jumping the ice breaks he is as concerned (or more concerned) with the reactions of the watching boys as with his actual encounter and dance with the danger of ice and water. For me there is a loss of purity with the observer-reaction focus about which I feel uneasy, even a little sad.

But Jonah assures me, "I'm just pitting myself against the icy cold water," and stresses that it is no deeper than his waist. When he tells me these things I remind myself what the Arctic/Antarctic explorer, Will Steiger, says about his own upbringing in Minnesota. He says that there was nothing he and his brothers could do that would cause his conventional but permissive parents to say no. Because I admire Will Steiger's adventurous approach to his world, I have taken these words from his home environment seriously.

I think all of us as parents do have a hidden curriculum, and it has taken me all of these years to actually put words to mine, but I now see that it underscores all that we do in our particular style of homeschooling. I don't know if it is especially necessary to be aware of it, but I do think it has helped me to clarify and understand much of my children's behavior and their actions during the teenage years.

JOHN HOLT'S BOOK AND MUSIC STORE

Everything is Somewhere:

The Geography Quiz Book
by Jack McClintock and David Helgren #1670 $12.95

When we were deciding whether to add this book to our catalog, one of the things that made us hesitate was that it's called a quiz book, and indeed is set up like one. We had unpleasant visions of parents using this book as a handy set of ready-made geography tests, or thinking that our carrying it meant that we favored that kind of activity.

But, as with many books in our catalog, while *Everything is Somewhere* certainly *can* be used in unpleasant or more schoolish ways, it doesn't have to be, and it's up to readers, of course, to decide. The lists of questions and answers in this book are so interesting and entertaining, and there are many other ways to use a book like this besides requiring that children sit down and take the quizzes. Its subtitle is "the most fun way ever to learn about our world and everything in it," which should give readers a clue about the attitude the authors hope readers will take toward the material. When I read this book, I sometimes enjoy testing myself - that is, reading through the questions and seeing whether I know the answers before I turn to the next page to check. But I also enjoy using it as an interesting kind of encyclopedia, skimming through to see which questions spark my curiosity and then turning to the answers right away. In other words, it's easy (and enjoyable) to use this book to learn new things. Even though "quiz book" suggests that you'd use it to test yourself on material that you've supposedly learned already, this book's organization makes it an ideal reference book, too. I can also imagine families having fun reading the book aloud together, either trying to answer the questions or just reading the answers to the ones that capture your attention.

Here are some entertaining questions from the first quiz in the book: "At what international border do you make the biggest leap in time, from zone to zone?" "If you went into your backyard and started digging and dug all the way through the center of the earth to the other side, would you end up in China? Or where? How would you find out the answer?" "Which country would you say has the highest murder rate in the world?"

As you see, these questions have the feel of questions that kids (or any of us) often ask or wonder about, so this is a good book to have around for those times when you get asked questions that you can't immediately answer. Once you dip into it to find the answer to a specific question, you'll get drawn in by other questions close by. For example, from the section on animals: "Where would you find the most venomous snake?" "Does an endangered species always die out in the end?" Or from the section on people: "Who are the world's worst mathematicians?" "Which country has the most lawyers?"

I'm having trouble not quoting many more questions, because so many of them are irresistible. This is a book to enjoy and savor. — Susannah Sheffer

The Geography Coloring Book

by Wynn Kapit #1680 $9.95

Soon after we moved to the Netherlands, I realized that my knowledge of European geography, though it might be above average by American standards, was too sketchy to allow me to understand fully the international news and history I was encountering. Which countries did the Rhine and the Danube pass through, where exactly was the Black Sea, which Mediterranan island was which? Which direction, precisely, was it from Amsterdam to London? (Mostly west and a little south, which feels wrong - I keep thinking it should be a little north.)

I remembered *The Geography Coloring Book* I had brought along from Holt Associates, and I pulled it out. The instructions seemed sensible and simple enough that I decided to follow them. I borrowed the lighter colors of my daughter's felt tip markers and spent a happy week coloring one map after another in the Europe and Asia sections. The process was both soothing and stimulating, and I heartily recommend it.

There are a series of maps for each continent. The first map emphasizes the names of the countries and their locations. The next map shows physical features - rivers, mountain ranges, and lakes, with smaller maps showing mountain peaks and overall land regions. Then come a series of maps showing each region of the continent in greater detail. During the time I colored around the boundary of each country (in the North America section, this would be state or province), I had a chance to reflect on the special circumstances - who bordered whom, where the cities were located, etc.

Facing each map is a page packed with information about each region, in tiny type. You color the headline of each section to match the color you put on the map, and this physical cross-referencing draws you into reading the text, which was in most cases quite interesting.

I applaud the care and thought put into the design of this book. Usually when I recommend "educational" material, I suggest people ignore the instructions and just have fun with it, but in this case, it appears to me that the best way to use the material is indeed to follow the few simple steps outlined in the introduction.

Other bonuses are maps on plate tectonics, size comparisons, and thematic maps such as world climate, languages, and religions. Even if you don't complete all the coloring, this book is still as valuable a reference as an expensive, full-color atlas would be. — Donna Richoux

Discovery of the Americas

by Betsy and Giulio Maestro #1664 $5.95

When I first read the title of this book, I groaned, thinking it was going to be yet another book about Christopher Columbus, our country's beloved hero and discoverer. I have read my share of those books, so I was very relieved to find that this book was something else entirely. *The Discovery of the Americas* is a magical journey through America's past, from the first nomad who walked across from Asia to Columbus's journey in 1492.

The text is simple and easy enough to read aloud to a young child, and in-depth enough to challenge older readers as well. It is organized as a collection of stories of many explorers, from Irish monks to Phonecian traders who "discovered" the Americas for themselves. It mixes legends and mysteries in with historical facts and records. The illustrations are vibrant and beautiful, making the stories come alive.

I was pleased to see a book that presented the facts about the "discovery" of the Americas, describing in rich detail the Native American cultures that were already in existence before any European set foot on the Americas. The book also addresses the sad fact that after the establishment of European colonies in the Americas, life for Native Americans would never be the same.

I was also glad that the authors did not entirely discredit Columbus and his fellow explorers, who, after all, were brave adventurers and should be remembered.

The book also provides some additional information at the back, including a list of peoples of the ancient Americas and a table of important dates. The information is useful and interesting for readers who want to learn more.

Reading *The Discovery of the Americas* is a beautiful voyage of discovery in itself. This book is an invaluable resource for teaching and learning, and a wonderful addition to anyone's bookshelf. — Mika Perrine

The Erie Canal

by Peter Spier #1668 $5.95

I usually stay away from recommending or reviewing "young children" books because I have found very few that truly appeal to me. The plots are often silly, the words lame, or the art ugly. I find I can read simple text aloud with my brain switched off, thinking about something else. I feel fortunate in that when Norna was quite small, she would bring me books but refuse to be read to - she wanted to look at the pictures and hear me talk about them, but the moment I started to read the words (even when, I swear, there was no sing-song in my tone), she would insist on turning the page. That suited me, as thinking and talking about what I saw was much more mentally stimulating to me than mere reading. These inclinations of hers and mine led us to discover and enjoy "wordless" books, like Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman* and Peter Spier's *Rain*.

Looking for other books by Spier, we found this one, *The Erie Canal*, which we enjoy as much now as we did several years ago. Its only words are the well-known song that starts, "I've got an old mule and her name is Sal, fifteen miles on the Erie Canal." I sing the song and we study the busy, colorful paintings. Spier recreates the bustling life on the canal in the mid 19th century by following one barge, the "Small Hope," its stout genial master and his family, up and down the canal, "from Albany to Buffalo," as the song says. Spier traveled the length of the old canal himself and his watercolors masterfully combine the present physical reality (hills, bridges), his research of the past (boats, building, wagons), and his imagination of the vanished waterfront life - workers, passersby, animals, barrels, etc. There are always new details to see. The last time we read it, we set ourselves the puzzle: could we find the "Small Hope" or the barge-master in every painting? (Answer: we think so.)

An appendix answers the most often asked questions about the canal, and explains the historical importance of this first cheap and fast route to link the East to the West and thus open the frontier to development. What a pleasant way to introduce small children to American history. — Donna Richoux

Voices of the Civil War

by Milton Meltzer #1714 $14.95

This is a wonderful example of a book that is best read in parts. I loved dipping in and out of it. Since it is divided into 29 short sections (they're not quite long enough to be chapters), you can easily read a section or two or three and return again later without feeling as if you've lost the thread of the story completely.

The story of the Civil War is told through excerpts from diaries, letters, newspapers, interviews, speeches, memoirs, and ballads. There is an incredible variety of viewpoints - in age alone, they range from teenagers to the very old. The book presents the events in chronological order, and it does a good job of chronicling the events leading up to the war as well as documenting many lesser-known side issues and conflicts.

I was particularly struck by the parallels between the late nineteenth century and today. So often, we view history as something old, to be studied out of books and learned for the sake of a test or a class. I know that I myself am often guilty of forgetting the relevance of past eras to today. For instance, a picture of Jefferson Davis's campaign button appears early in the book. The button has Davis's face pictured in the center, and the slogan "The Right Man in the Right Place: Jeff Davis, Our First President." I had thought campaign buttons and slogans were a fairly recent invention! The book also has quotes from a *London Times* reporter who visited the Southern U.S. in 1861 to get an idea of what people were like and how they lived.

Some other things I especially enjoyed were the section on Black troops and the picture of Lincoln's cabinet meeting (this is one thing that *has* changed in 130 years - the picture shows only about 5 or 6 people sitting around informally; no high-tech equipment, no power suits!). I was also intrigued by the letter from an abolitionist author to a friend, detailing the goods and clothes sent to now-homeless ex-slaves outside of Washington, D.C., and by a young soldier's description of his incredible luck during battle.

Reading the battle scenes brought home to me some of the reality of war. Since I am somewhat of a pacifist, I was prepared to dislike these scenes. However, I was pleasantly surprised to note that there are not that many, for, as Meltzer says in his foreword, they are often too similar to bear repetition. By reading descriptions such as the ones in the book, though, you get far more of an idea of the danger and confusion of a battlefield than you would by reading a simple description in a history textbook.

So, this is a book for the child or the adult who has an interest, however slight, in American social history and the Civil War. I found it to be enjoyable, informative reading.

— Amanda Bergson-Shilcock

People's History of the United States

by Howard Zinn #1704 $12

Of all the reasons for educating children at home, avoiding history as presented in schools is the most compelling. What passes for history in most school textbooks and curricula contains so many untruths, half-truths and left-out-truths that the total picture is eventually a pack of lies. And, I believe, not innocent or completely accidental lies, but deliberate fabrications designed to misinform the young. The purpose of this misinformation is to get them to think that only certain people and events are worthy of being part of our collective memory and identity. These are determined by the political objectives of the present.

History always reflects more about the time *in* which it is wrtten than the times *about* which it is written. A writer can only write for the world of the present. The people responsible for most of the history taught in schools are concerned more with the con-trol of the students than with their intellectual enlightenment or liberation. Historical perspectives that challenge the status quo or empower the young, especially those from traditionally disempowered groups, have no place in the educational establishment.

A People's History of the United States is a refreshing departure from and antidote to what most of us learned in school. Zinn brings a perspective that is almost the opposite of the orthodox one of being concerned with heroic (and anti-heroic) leaders in certain categories - party politics, wars, business, royalty, etc. This book is concerned with the struggles and fates of ordinary people, particularly the ways they resisted being dominated and mistreated by the ruling class - and the book is not boring. One of the greatest lies about history is the one that is implicit in most students' experience: that it is tedious in the extreme and no one would choose to learn about it if not forced by compulsory schooling. Zinn's book is fascinating, compelling reading. How has he achieved this?

White middle- and upper-class men are the main concern of most school books, so history is defined as their history. They are implicitly the real humans. By not mentioning the stories and perspectives of women, native peoples, immigrants, racial minorities, children, workers, etc., historians imply that these people had no history. They were obviously there, and their presence is usually mentioned, but, as they had little power, they are thought to be of no interest or importance.

Zinn's purpose is to give information about, and bring into focus, the experience of the minority groups (actually the majority of the people at all times). Beginning with the Carribean natives who were conquered by Columbus and detailing the horrendous cruelty involved in their destruction, and ending with the social change movements of the 1970s, this book is a very comprehensive survey of many of the major historical periods from the viewpoint of a far wider section of the populace than is usually given.

Zinn is a superb historian. His information is well documented and his use of sources, particularly primary ones, is excellent. This is user-friendly history, highly readable, with arguments that are strong and easy to follow. It is scholarly history for scholars and

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non-scholars alike. Even readers who do not share his left-of-center political point of view would be interested in the information and sources on which he bases his conclusions.

I believe that schools primarily oppress, rather than educate, children. A major part of all oppression is misinformation. By promoting the racist, sexist, and classist lies about our past, school "history" plays a significant part in the oppression of the young. Historians often say that the first task in serious historical study is to unlearn what was taught in school. This book is a vast mine of information which will not have to be unlearned, as is shown by Zinn's exhaustive documentation. It is suitable for adult and teenage readers, and is an excellent resource for homeschoolers. — Maureen Carey

Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed: The Story of the Village of Le Chambon and How Goodness Happened There by Philip Hallie #1694 $11

Most books on World War II or the Holocaust focus on the horrors of those times. *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed* tells a part of the story too often neglected. In the midst of all this evil, the tiny village of Le Chambon in the south of France became a city of refuge. Risking their own lives, these simple French peasants saved the lives of thousands of refugees between 1940 and 1944, most of them Jews.

I cannot pretend to write an unbiased review of this book. It made a deep impression on me when I first read it years ago, and its author, Philip Hallie, has since become a dear friend of mine. Hallie is a philosopher of ethics, but his book is not an airy, academic, abstract analysis. He sees ethics not primarily in moral codes or systems but in the actions of real people. He points out that the word *ethics* comes from the Greek word for *character*, "an individual's way of feeling, thinking, and acting." Thus Hallie sticks to the facts, to the story of Le Chambon and the characters in it. And what a beautiful and moving story it is. It would have made a great novel were it not for the fact that the story is true! Indeed, what makes the story of Le Chambon so beautiful, as at least one reviewer has noted, is simply the fact that it happened.

The people of Le Chambon, or the *Chambonnais* as they are called in the book, were pacifists. They were totally committed to nonviolence, inspired by the pastor of the village, André Trocmé (the "soul of Le Chambon"), his resourceful, tireless, and generous wife, Magda, and the assistant pastor, Édouard Theis. But theirs is an active form of nonviolence. Being pacifists, the Chambonnais refused to kill or bear arms, even in the name of "defense." But further, their nonviolence led them to *prevent other people from doing harm* by hiding and protecting the Jewish victims from the Nazis and their Vichy collaborators.

> They were trying to protect the victims, but they were also trying to stop human beings who were hell-bent on becoming victimizers, hell-bent on doing evil. Trocmé and Theis believed that if they failed to protect those in Le Chambon, they, the ministers, would share the guilt of the evil ones who actually perpetrated the harmdoing.

However, the Chambonnais were not professional do-gooders. As Magda put it, "I try not to hunt around to find things to do. I do not hunt around to find people to help. But I never close my door, never refuse to help someone who comes to me and asks for something."

The miraculous thing about the acts of love and care performed by the Chambonnais was that they really worked: they saved lives. Their deeds were so pure that they even touched the hearts of the oppressors — not all of them, but enough of them to keep the village from being raided or destroyed. Hallie relates how this happened:

> As the Resistance in Le Chambon developed, a curious phenomenon was taking place there: many of the Vichy police were being "converted" (as Trocmé puts it in his notes) to helping the Chambonnais and their Jews. Even as the official policy of Vichy toward Le Chambon and the Jews was hardening, *individuals* among the police and the bureaucrats of Vichy were more and more frequently resisting their orders to catch or hurt people who had done no visible harm to anyone. They found themselves helping those who were trying to save these innocent, driven creatures. Caring was infectious.

Hallie tells how, during the latter half of the Occupation when the Nazis were in the vicinity of Le Chambon, the Trocmés would receive mysterious phone calls. The voice on the other end would say, "Attention! Attention! Tomorrow morning!" and then hang up abruptly. This was a signal that there would be a *rafle* (round up) the next morning. Such warnings would trigger what André Trocmé came to call "the disappearance of the Jews." The Jews would be hidden in basements, attics, and barns. They would disappear into the woods, so that when the authorities arrived for their round up, not a Jew could be found. During the final part of the Occupation, when things got quite dangerous and the village became overcrowded with refugees, many Jews were smuggled across the mountains into Switzerland.

The story of Le Chambon is filled with many close calls, some heart-rending tragedies (these were, after all, dangerous times), but mostly with simple acts of human kindness requiring great courage. *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed* is more than just a history book; it is a book about ethics, about the preciousness of human lives, about nonviolent resistance to evil, and about the true meaning of care and love. As the subtitle says, it is about how goodness happened there. The Chambonnais tend to shrug off that term, "goodness." "How can you call us 'good'?" they would say. "We were doing what had to be done. Who else could help them? And what has all this to do with goodness? Things had to be done, that's all, and we happened to be there to do them. You must understand that it was the most natural thing in the world to help these people."

In a world where there is so much violence and suffering, we seem to have lost touch with this natural human response. Aside from telling an important yet neglected piece of history, *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed* can inspire us not to close our doors, but to open them and say, as Magda Trocmé said countless times to the desperate strangers who knocked at her door, "Naturally, come in, and come in!" — Aaron Falbel

FOCUS: I'll Never Do *That* When I Grow Up!

Have you ever said to yourself (or do you remember saying), "When I grow up, I'm never going to do *that* to kids"? Have you ever vowed to remember what it feels like to be a child in a particular situation? We asked several young GWS readers to write about what they think adults sometimes forget about kids' thoughts, or feelings, or perspective, and what they want to try to remember.

Trusting Kids' Judgment

From Nathan Post (VT):

Last fall I started a correspondence with one of my mom's friends. In my last letter that I sent him, I enclosed a poem that I wrote. In his return letter he thanked me for sharing my poem and then went on to say that both of our poetry (his and mine) does not flow smoothly, but that would change as we wrote more poetry. After I read his letter I was very mad. I was not asking for criticism. I was just sharing one of my creations with him.

When I'm an adult, I wouldn't give criticism to a friend without making sure they wanted it. This ties in with last issue's Focus on feedback.

Last year my grandma and grandpa visited us. I needed new shoes and my grandma wanted to buy them for me. We went to a shoe store. I tried on many pairs of shoes, but the store didn't have any shoes that were comfortable. My grandma said that was OK. Then on the way home she told me that one of the pairs of shoes that I had tried on was very nice and that I should have gotten them. She didn't seem to trust me that the shoes were uncomfortable. When this happened, I felt upset, hurt, and confused. I thought, "Maybe I should have gotten the shoes just to make her happy." I also didn't think that it was fair that we only tried one shoe store. All these feelings made me feel horrible.

I would always let a person decide whether or not they wanted something that I was offering them and I would trust their judgment.

I was 7 when I first became interested in model trains. My mom placed an ad in the local newspaper asking if anyone who had model trains would let us come over to see them. One person answered the ad and said he'd be happy to have us come to his house to see his train set-up. He not only showed us his trains, he really shared his enthusiasm for his hobby with us. Two years later, he came to my house to see my model train set-up. It meant a lot to me to be able to show my trains to someone who was also interested in the same hobby.

When I am an adult, I would like to share my interest with young people, too.

Seeing Things On Each Level

From Mae Shell (VT):

I have always told myself that *I* will never be the kind of grown-up who doesn't understand kids. No matter how old I get, the memory of being a child will always be crystal clear.

But each year I forget more! And I realize that while I won't forget some things about being a child, I will forget a lot of it. My parents have always been fairly understanding, and I hope to be just as much, if not more so. Just thinking about this makes me realize how hard it must be sometimes to be a good parent. Mine haven't always been perfect (have anybody's?).

I also realize that since I am the oldest in my family, to a certain extent I have always been the guinea pig. Many of the things my parents learned about raising children they learned from trial and error (like all parents). I being the "trial." I am sure that when I have my own children, the eldest will also be a guinea pig.

I can think of two incidents in particular when my parents could have dealt with me differently. The first happened when I was about 4 or 5. One day I took out a bunch of toys and squirreled them away in our living room. I made a house out of couch and chair cushions and played for several hours in my imaginary world. Then I got up and went to do something else, leaving the "mess" I had made behind. My mother was probably very tired that day, or was thinking about something else. Anyway, she forbade me to leave the room until I had cleaned up.

I got very upset and started to cry. I told her I was too tired and I had to eat something first, then I would clean up. In the midst of my "begs for mercy," the phone rang, and so she really wasn't paying attention to me. I tried several times to slip past her, but she was guarding the doorway.

In only a few minutes, I had convinced myself that I was at the point of collapse and starving to death. I couldn't understand how my own mother could be so terribly cruel.

The funny thing about this incident is that I have no recollection of how it ended! But when I took the first draft of this article to my mother to proofread, she remembered what happened perfectly: she let me go, once she realized that forcing me to clean up wasn't fair. While I have long since forgiven her for being so "cruel," I have vowed never to do the same thing to any of my own children. However, seeing that moods change and people have bad days, I can't say I am sure I will keep that vow, much as I want to!

The second incident I'm thinking of stretched out several years, but it started when I was about 8 or 9. My parents decided that I should learn how to do subtraction. I already knew addition, and was perfectly satisfied with my amount of knowledge in that particular academic subject.

They sat me down and tried to make me understand, but I could not make heads or

tails of borrowing. The session ended in tears, as did the many like it that followed.

It was several years before I was able to grasp the concept of borrowing. One day I became very determined to learn subtraction, and after only a few minutes of "tutoring," I said, "Oh, I see now!" and I have been able to do it since.

I still have a phobia about math, and I believe that maybe I wouldn't fear it quite so much if I had learned subtraction as I learned addition: when I was ready. I have always liked a challenge, as long as it isn't forced upon me. So, I have vowed never to force any academic subject (especially math!) upon any of my children. But once again, I am not entirely positive I will be able to keep that vow.

Even though our parents are trying to raise us on the basis of "children learn when they are ready," I can see how they might worry when we don't learn something when we are "supposed to." Often, when that happens, the parents sit their kid down and attempt to *make* the child learn.

In most cases, as in my own, it only ends in frustration for both parties. The child wonders why in the world his/her parents are trying to teach something that makes no sense at all, and the parents are frustrated that the child can't understand something "so simple."

The most parents can do is be as understanding as possible towards all children, their own and others. That is what I am going to try to do as an adult. People understand things on many different levels throughout their lives. In order for us all to get along, we must just try our best to see things on each level. We may not really understand it that way, but at least we will have tried.

In ending, I just want to say to my parents, who may be reading this, that I have forgiven them for the above incidents, and I understand, in both cases, why they did what they did. We have all learned from each other's mistakes.

Don't Go Back On Your Word

From Kai Crowe-Getty (VA):

Once I was riding in the front seat of a relative's car, which was very special to me. We were going to pick up my cousin. When we got there he said, "Kai, you have to get in the back seat of the car." "But you said I could ride in the front," I said. "Well, now you have to get in the back." I said, "No." Then he picked me up and put me in the back. My cousin got in the front and we drove home.

I was 3 at the time, and this was one of many problems with him and other adults. It made me feel that when I was older I would not go back on my word to a child.

Be Open and and Honest

From Meredith Conroy (PA):

I wish more adults could be open and honest with kids. Kids often understand and observe a lot more than adults think they do. I've noticed when adults are speaking to each other they usually don't talk in a high voice with a fake smile on their faces. Kids notice the difference. People don't talk down to me anymore because I'm older, but it used to make me feel really uncomfortable.

My advice to people who aren't used to being around kids is to just be yourself. If you open yourself up, most kids will respond positively. In that way, you can get to know them better.

A great example is one of my adult friends, Tracey. She treats kids like younger people. She makes them feel really important. If she's speaking with a kid and an adult comes up, she doesn't immediately shift her attention to the adult. She'll let the kid finish because she cares about what he or she has to say.

Tracey challenges kids to think. I like that because in my opinion kids should think more than they do. I hope when I grow up I can remember how she makes kids feel and how she does it.

My parents have always dealt with me as a responsible, mature person. Most other adults I've worked with and known have treated me in the same way.

Kids are wonderfully creative, clever people, just smaller than adults. They have helped to get laws passed, written and illustrated books, been on television and radio, and even saved lives. They deserve respect from adults and an opportunity to share experiences; to learn and to teach.

My Views Are Not as Good

From Meghann O'Day (AR):

The thing I hate most is adults presuming that because I am younger or wasn't alive during the event in question my views are not as good as theirs.

A few months ago I was at my writers' group. I am the youngest person there (as always). To understand our meeting you have to understand that we talk about everything except writing! Anyway, we were talking about the Vietnam War, and I explained my view on U.S. involvement. I arrived at this view after lots of careful reading, discussion, and thought. However, they accused me of buying into a big government lie. I do not think that their view is any better; in fact, mine might be better because it is impartial. I had thought that these people, my friends, regarded me as an equal, and in many ways they do. But they still do not consider my opinions about history to be on the same level as theirs.

Wants to Learn On His Own

From Trevor Killory-Andersen (MA):

When I was in third grade, I left school to learn at home. Even though I am homeschooled and traditional school was a terrible experience for me, my parents insist that I do schoolwork. They want me to do things like math in a textbook and writing essays.

I'm not sure how I would rather learn, but I could figure it out better on my own without them bugging me and getting upset about it. I learned to read on my own because I was really interested in the Tintin books and Space Dog books and I wanted to be able to read them. I read them over and over until I understood them. I don't know why I picked up these books, but for the first time, I *wanted* to read.

If I had kids I would homeschool them. I would let them learn on their own. I would want them to learn from life experience, not from textbooks and worksheets, which make you learn

and do in only one way and are full of busy work. Some books, like *The I Hate Mathematics Book*, help you to see math in real life, and I like that. When my parents make me do "sit down and learn" work I feel frustrated and know I won't learn anything from doing it.

Even though I only got the hang of reading a little while ago, I am already reading *Lord of the Rings*. I think because I was left alone about my reading, I was able to take this huge step up in a short time. It takes me about a week to get through one chapter in this book, but it's a lot of fun doing it.

I'll Try Not to Nag

From TJ Jones (MN):

One of the things I dislike most is when my mom and dad bug me about doing something right away when I think it could wait. This is something I would try not to do. For example, one time I was playing GameBoy. My mom asked me to brush my teeth and wash my face. I wanted to finish my game, and said I would do it in a minute but she kept on nagging me. Then, I finally pushed "time out" and went to clean up. I was feeling kind of mad at my mom because I thought she was nagging me too much. I would have done it anyway even if she had left me alone. When I'm older, I want to try not to do that, and try to remember how I felt.

I do not like to be interrupted when I'm drawing or playing. If my mom would let me know what she wants me to do and trust me to do it when I'm done, that would be better. That's what I want to try to do.

When my mom and I are working on phonics, my mom sometimes reads the part written for adults to read. It sounds kind of babyish and weird, and if she keeps reading it I get mad at her. This is another thing I would try not to do.

Also, sometimes I get mad at my dad for being too bossy. I would like it better if he didn't act so bossy, but talked to me a little more calmly. I want to try to talk calmly when I'm older.

Doesn't Like Quizzing

From Kait O'Day (AR):

Just recently my father quizzed me and my sisters on math. Now I assume he did not know that math is very frustrating for me. He thought since my sisters were having fun, that I was too.

When grown-ups ask me what school I go to, I say that I am unschooled and they just say "oh" and walk away, like I'm some contagious disease. When we lived in St. Louis, we went to the auto shop and a man asked us what school we went to. We said we were homeschooled and he asked us what 4000 plus 4000 was! I hate being exploited like that. It's not fair. I wish that it would happen to them some time so they would know how it feels.

Silly Ways of Relating to Kids

From Corianna Sichel (NJ):

Here is an example of how grown-ups are sometimes very silly in their way of relating to kids. We, my father, mother, and my little sister Amarynth, were at a train station one day. I was sitting across from two men. One of the men, to get my attention, or to see my reaction, or to relate to me, stuck out his tongue at me. I felt bad and tried not to pay attention. When I grow up I'm never going to stick out my tongue to a child.

Another thing is I would never try to start a conversation with a kid I didn't know. We have a bus stop in front of our house, and when I'm playing outside, I will get asked questions by grown-ups like, "What are you doing?" I say no or yes and try to answer the questions as well as I can, but I don't try to carry on a conversation with them. For example, I was riding my bike around the block one day. A man asked me, "Could you take me for a ride on your bike?" I said, "No." He said, "Why?" I said, 'Because." Then he said "OK" and left me alone.

Kids Can Be Responsible

From Lisette Torres (DC):

Sometimes when I see people smoking I say to myself I will never do that when I get bigger. I always imagine myself coughing or getting addicted.

Once I was about to go on a ferris wheel and the man said, "Sorry, you're too short." I was so mad! I wish I had been taller that day.

My mom's friend had a baby. I asked if I could hold it and she said no. I think grown-ups tend to forget that children and young adults can do things too and have responsibility too. Anyway, she said, "Maybe next time when the baby gets older." Boy, that made me very mad!

Hard to be the Oldest

From Jesse Williams (WA):

I have a lot of things that I try not to do because I'd be putting someone else in a situation I know I don't like. A situation that I find myself in a lot comes up when I'm horsing around with a friend. I, say, step on a friend's hand by accident. The friend doesn't hold me responsible but I still feel really bad. So whenever I get hurt in a situation like that I make a real effort to shake it off, say I'll be fine, and keep playing.

One thing that my parents are pretty bad about is when a friend of mine is really misbehaving, neither of them will do a thing about it. Since I'm usually trying to defend myself or get even, my parents will usually tell me to cool it or stop causing trouble. Even though I hate this now, I guess I'll probably do the same thing to my kids when I grow up.

I don't think I'll ever forget how hard it is to be the oldest. My parents are pretty good about not favoring the youngest, but it's still hard. I think the worst part is that younger siblings are used to competing with older ones. Then when they meet someone their own size, it's a lot easier. For the older child it works the opposite way. When they meet someone their own size, their competition seems really big and hard to face. I'm thinking of wrestling, but this philosophy applies to more than you might think.

Mostly I just try to keep it light and not take anything too seriously. My sister and I can be fighting, seriously at each other's throats, but at a certain point, one of us will usually kind of quit. If it was very bad we will give each other a hug and go on to do something else. We don't even keep grudges from one second to the next.

But What Do Homeschoolers *Do*?

In GWS #92, we asked to hear from kids who were keeping their own homeschooling records. 16-year-old Mali Sastri sent us several months of reports she has written for Clonlara's Home Based Education Program. Mali's reports show that it is possible to keep records in a fairly informal, unobtrusive way, and that older homeschoolers can do this work themselves. They also give a vivid picture of one teenage homeschooler's life - particularly the ups and downs, the fluctuations in intensity; notice the way Mali takes breaks from some subjects and then comes back to them. We would love to see more such reports. Some excerpts from Mali's:

December:

After the month of November, I decided I really needed a change from the hourly grid charts to record my home study. I felt I was working for the grids - just so I could fill in the boxes - and I was neglecting what was most important to me. So, for December I decided to write up a report at the end of the month, which follows. I ended up being more productive than I was during the fall, and I hope to continue the rest of the year with monthly write-ups.

English: For the first few months of the year, I dreaded picking up a book. But not in December. Maybe it was the cold weather, or maybe my mind was just hungry for books. Anyway, I leapt back into feminism and was overjoyed at finding a bigger feminist book section at our library than I had previously thought existed. Also, while reading, I marked down pages which I wanted to remember when I was finished, then went back and wrote the phrases down. I now have ten handwritten pages of thoughts, theories, and ideas. One of the reasons I disliked reading was because I couldn't concentrate and I'd easily forget what I just read. By writing it down, I found I understood it more thoroughly and could remember it. ...

Math: I am working out of the Saxon Math Algebra book and enjoying it. I really love algebra - all the patterns and complications. I'm also glad to say that in the beginning of the year my average grade was 10 out of 30 problems wrong! Now my average is 2 out of 10 wrong - and usually those two are results of careless errors. ...

Science: Endoplasmic reticulum, ATP molecules, Golgi apparatus, dialysis, enzymes, epithelial tissues - I know all about it now! I started my Physiology/Anatomy book at the beginning of the year, hoping to learn about bones and muscles. My interest stemmed from being a dancer. When I found out I had to get through chapters of cells, cell metabolism, tissues, etc., I wasn't thrilled. But now I can't put the book down. I have learned so much. Yes, the book is hard and dense and huge but I'm learning science. ...

German: I'm taking my second year of correspondence course through the University of Nebraska. I felt that during November I needed a break from German but in December I leapt back into it. In fact, I'm finding myself saying something and then its German meaning will pop into my head. ...

Music: December was a month in which a big step was made in this, my favorite, subject. I'm to be in my first musical gig in January. I'll be performing several newly written songs and some classical pieces on my guitar in a charity fundraiser for CEASE [an animal rights group where Mali volunteers]. Hopefully, if all goes well, we'll do these performances monthly and I might bring my show to coffee house open mikes. Along with practicing intensely for this, I've been filled with many new ideas for songs, have arranged several songs on my synthesizer in record time (one took only two days!), and I also played the piano for the Lexington Senior Center.

January:

English: This month I did a lot of creative writing, which I had been neglecting previously for some unknown reason, as I do very much enjoy writing. ... I wrote four articles for *The 21st Century*, a teen-written newspaper in my area, and I have ideas for many more. This is a great chance to write, and to make some money which I could really use. "An Introduction to Herstory" is about the effect of school-taught history on boys and girls. "Labels - Black and White" is about the negative and positive connotations attached to these words. "opus III - Mind Fruit" is an album review, and "Sandy Hagen's Jazz Dance Center" is an article about the studio where I dance. So, I covered the subjects of English, Social Studies, History/Herstory, and music. ...

Social Studies: I was granted my wish to have the chance to talk with a group of 6th grade girls at Clarke Middle School about self-esteem and how it relates to being female. The group will probably get underway in February, so in the meantime I am brainstorming how to present my ideas to the kids. ... I not only want to help the girls themselves, I also want to find out if attitudes are changing, for the better or for the worse. I know this will be challenging, but I'm eager to start. I also continued reading a lot on Australia. Because I have a sincere interest in the place, all the information is collecting in my head. This is a crystal clear example of school vs. unschool. In school I was forced to do a project on a country. I chose Mali for obvious reasons, but I can't remember any of what I learned. With Australia, I am not testing myself on where the cities are, or what the deserts are named, yet I know this just from my interest. ...

Science: I am really moving in my Human Anatomy book. I worked my way through two whole chapters ... I even have a color illustration of skin to show for my hard work.

German: I'm sorry to say that January just wasn't my month for German, and after the first week of the new year, I basically forgot about it. But I've already started up on it again and am relieved that I've forgotten nothing.

Music: On January 9, I was in my first musical gig - a charity show for CEASE. It went great, and now I am looking into coffee house open mikes. I am going for every opportunity I can get. I even got an amplifier this month just for that purpose. I also played in a piano recital, and finished my demo tape - 11 songs in all. I'm giving recording a rest and would like to devote my time now to performing, arranging new songs on my synthesizer, and writing.

Gym: I am still dancing as usual and I'm understanding just how important a thorough warm-up is to a satisfying workout. I'm also continuing weight-training and am slowly raising the weight. During a two-day January thaw, I got a chance to bike. Speaking of biking, I am

most likely going to go on a 12-day bike trip in the summer.

February:

English: I'm really getting excited about writing for newspapers. Besides the teen-run *21st Century* that I've recently submitted several articles to, I've also discovered ways to write to local town and city papers, through the "To the Editor" and "Reader Forum" sections. I never knew the public was allowed to write in about anything their heart desired! I think this is a great way to express your ideas to others, and I can't wait to get started. ... I've also finally started that journal, and I'm glad I have. It's helpful to write things out, and when I'm feeling stuck or stifled, by writing to support myself I can start to believe what I know is in my mind.

Math: I'm still plugging away at algebra. When I first started my book, I was overwhelmed by the 120+ lessons and the hundreds of pages, but my goal of finishing the book seems less distant as I approach lesson 50. ...

Science: I started out interested in anatomy and physiology because of dance, and really wanted to learn about bones, muscles, and ligaments. Well, at last I'm on the lesson in my anatomy book entitled "Support and Movement - The Skeletal and Muscle Systems." But I haven't regretted in the least anything I've studied in the last months. I just completed "Body Organization," where I learned all about body cavities, regions, planes, and a basic outline of all the systems. Beginning with the skeletal system, I'll now study each system more thoroughly. Also, a neighbor of mine who has had lymph tissue removed from her neck has asked me each morning to help her with her acupressure machine, called Thumper. It's a small, hand-held device that massages and helps the circulation. I've learned a lot from her about the lymph system, and about barometric pressure and all sorts of things.

Social Studies: We're going to England! I've tried reading a bit on the country in travel guides and such, but going to see the Royal Palace and other such historical buildings doesn't excite me, so I really can't wait to see the country for myself. ... When we get back, I should be starting the self-esteem group with the 6th graders. I've done more reading and note-taking and I have a better idea of how I'm going to present everything. I also think I'm going to learn a lot from the kids, and I think it's going to be a great exchange! Next week, I'm also going to be involved in Women's History Week at Harvard University, which should be exciting. I also attended a Student-Choice for Dissection workshop, organized by NEAVS (New England Anti-Vivisection Society), where I learned a lot about the cruelty behind dissection, the violation of one's conscious values by being forced to dissect, and the wide array of other options. This has inspired me to write an article on all I learned. ... I also learned about a teen hotline called Samariteens, where one can volunteer three hours a week to answer calls from depressed and suicical teenagers. I'd be very interested in doing this - maybe after I complete the self-esteem group so I would've learned more about these things - but my mother will need some talking into.

German: I jumped back into German this month, mostly doing review. I only wish there was someone I could talk to in German, since speaking it is the hardest part. The sentence structure is so bizarre. I did learn that there is a German woman who takes dance classes at the studio I take at, so if I'm ever really stumped, I can ask her for help.

Music: How could I forget music? It's basically what I've been doing this past month. I have three open mikes I know I'll be doing. ... Also [a neighbor of mine] used to build recording studios and knows tons about music, recording, synthesizers, etc. She's been lending me literally loads of CDs, and what's more, she knows a man who has developed many digital recording inventions, who builds recording studios and knows lots and lots of producers, and she's going to send him one of my tapes. She knows a lot and helped me pick out which songs to send, and how to set up the tape and all that professional stuff. ... I also jammed with my brother - he on sax, me on piano, and it was just so much fun! I can't wait to play in a band.

Art: I got back into art this year, doing some painting and drawing - inspired by my Mom's old sketch books (this works every time). ...

March:

English: We were in England for most of March, and where better to study English than England? I really love accents, and it was interesting to hear the different styles of English as we moved about the country: the broad, friendly Yorkshire, the light, educated Londoner accent, the rough and tumble Cockney. While in the Lake District we visited Wordsworth's house, so I learned a bit about this poet. ...

Social Studies: Just being in England, in another country, another culture not that much different than ours, but different enough, was plenty of social study. I found the English to be quiet, polite, courteous, pleasant, helpful, but raving lunatics behind the wheel! And the Londoners were international, busy, and bustling. London wa just too big and sprawling for me. We found ourselves always on the Underground, the subway, changing trains, looking at the map, and now I feel much more confident on the "T" here in Boston. ...

Science: I've done absolutely no work out of my science book. Everything has been very hectic with trying to plan things for the future. Although I'd genuinely have liked to, I couldn't possibly bring my *huge* anatomy book with me to England. Oh, sometimes there's just too much to do, but I will do more science next month.

German: England is far more international than America, and everywhere, things were translated into many languages, including German - so I was able to study a bit! German is a tough language to learn, but once you know the basics, the sentence structure, etc., all you need then is better vocabulary. Before we left home, I managed to complete one lesson, send it in, and I'm waiting for the results now.

Music: I did my first open mike at the beginning of last month at a restaurant called Christopher's. They do them the first Sunday of every month, so I'm going back again this Sunday. It was a success! It was strange singing into a microphone, and hearing my voice far away out of the speakers, yet also coming out of my mouth. Confusing! But they liked me! They really did! I was complimented on my "sophisticated songs," "harmonics," and "great singing." I even got interviewed by a *Boston Globe* reporter afterwards. He was doing an article on the open mike at Christopher's, and although he hadn't seen me play, he asked me some questions and I got my name in the paper. ... That neighbor of mine who promised to let some producers and artists listen to my tape, did, and told me the results. All the artists really liked it, but because it wasn't a complete demo, the producers said, "What can we do with this?" All in all, no one said to her, "You wasted my time." ...

Gym: Back at home, I'm dancing a whole lot, and I'm trying to inspire myself even more by seeing lots of dance performances. I saw the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, which didn't inspire me, the Australian movie *Strictly Ballroom*, which did, and the movie *Footloose*, which didn't. ...

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April:

English: In the next issue of *The 21st Century*, I found an article about my article [on *Herstory*]! And the author wasn't too pleased with it. But after reading her criticism, I still remain true to my beliefs and I don't feel the need to change anything I wrote. As a musician, I know I'll have to get used to the critics. I can take it. ...

Math: I can't do a math lesson every day, as it would take me much too long. I force myself to go back and redo all the problems I got wrong until I get them right, and I think this is a great philosophy that is almost always neglected in school. In school, the teacher reads the answers out loud, and if we get it wrong we either pretend we got it right, or else go over it with the whole class, which just isn't fair to the rest of the class, and often victimizes the student into looking dumb and incompetent if everyone else got it right. I find if I take the time to go over a wrong problem I understand it more fully, and also understand my mistake, giving me an awareness of when and where I am careless. ...

Science: I am still on the Skeletal System in my Anatomy book. It is endless. But I am taking my time, because that is the only way I am going to remember it. In addition to this, I checked out a book called *The Physics of Dance* from the library. I know I'll enjoy this one! ...

Social Studies: I started, and tomorrow will finish, my self-esteem group with the 6th graders at Clarke. I taped each episode and will do an extensive write-up about it. It didn't go exactly the way I wanted, because my intention was to work with just the girls, but I had to work with the boys, too. Which was fine, except my primary intentions were altered. ... The teacher I worked with was very helpful, and I'll discuss with her at this last meeting whether or not I should continue this with another group of kids. I think if I do, I'd like to propose it as a discussion group about sexism - against girls and boys. As violence spreads from the inner city to the suburbs (two students were recently expelled from Clarke for bringing knives to school), I think kids need to reject how society too often glamorizes violence as a "masculine" quality, bombarding boys and girls with it in movies and TV, deadening them to it, and finally resulting in them engaging in it. Kids also need to reject society's rejection of so-called "feminine" qualities like fear, crying, and caring, when fear and crying are natural and healthy responses to the crises we've been facing, and caring and compassion are the things that will save us. The word "sissy," still used, as the children I worked with pointed out, should be deleted from the English language. ...

Music: I did three more open mikes this month. The first was at the restaurant Christopher's again, but I felt it didn't go as well as the first time. I got extremely nervous, and the first song I played was too slow and personal to loosen me up. My voice even cracked! But the featured performer, hilarious comedian-musician Don White, was impressed, and I've run into him a few times since then at various coffee houses. He's very supportive and believes by [the time I'm] 20 I'll have a career. ...

Gym: I started taking dance classes at Impulse Dance Studio in Boston, along with my classes with Sandy Hagen. Adrienne Hawkins is my new teacher and she's great! The class is very strenuous and hard, and I was really feeling down and hopeless after one class, but she was encouraging by saying she didn't start dancing until she was 20, in college majoring in political science! ... PBS is airing a weekly special on dance which started yesterday and is very inspiring to me as an artist. I get all sorts of ideas from seeing dance the way it is portrayed in this show - different cultures, etc.

I also took care of my neighbor's dog for a week and got a lot of running in. I walked 20 miles in the Walk for Hunger last Sunday - and wasn't sore the next day! I've been on the bike path more often as the weather warms up. I've been to two Red Sox games, in addition to playing ball with my brother. And, religiously, every morning at breakfast I read the sports pages. ...

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When Schedules and Appointments are Useful

[SS:] Over the past few months I've done some work with older kids who are new to homeschooling, and this work has generated some ideas and thoughts that might be useful to families with older kids who have recently left school or, perhaps, long-time homeschoolers who are doing some reevaluating about which parts of their homeschooling are working well and which parts they want to change.

For kids who are new to homeschooling, the prospect of all that time, with no one telling you what to do, can be daunting. By now many people know that it's common for kids in this situation to take a break for a while, but when the need for that break diminishes and kids begin to feel ready for more activity and focus, it can be difficult to know where to start.

One thing I've found useful, when helping kids go through this process, is to make three lists. One list is for things that come easily, things that you would do anyway, whether or not you sat down and made a plan about them. The second list is for things that you want to work on but feel you need some help with — maybe suggestions of ways to pursue the activity, or maybe some sort of schedule or plan regarding it. The third list is for things you want to put aside for a while, things you don't want to work on right now.

The value of these lists, it seems to me, is that they show kids: (1) that they are already doing worthwhile things, and don't need outside intervention for everything; (2) at the same time, it's perfectly OK to want help in some areas, to have a list of things that you want to do but aren't sure how to do, and (3) that it's also OK to put some things aside for the time being. This might be especially important to kids who have had bad experiences with particular subjects in school and who would benefit from realizing that they have much more control in their new situation. Fourteen-year-old Marianne was very emphatic, for example, about putting essay writing on list 3, because she had had very unpleasant and discouraging experiences with essay writing in school, and for her, at that time, having control meant being able to say, "I choose not to work on that right now."

Marianne's list 2 was the longest, as I think it will be for many kids, and ultimately this list may be the most important, because it's the one from which ideas and plans can grow. As I said, it's very important to realize that much of what you're doing already has educational value (since school doesn't usually give kids credit for the things they willingly and eagerly pursue on their own). But it's just as important for the new homeschooler (or the long-time homeschooler who is looking to make some changes) to realize that it's fine to need help and to ask for it. Suppose a teenager has a vague feeling that she wants to do something with animals, but isn't sure what. That could go on list 2. Then, when the lists are made up and you sit down to give each item closer attention, you can begin to think: what kind of work with animals? what kind of help would you need in making that happen? and so on.

The same goes for more traditional academic work. Suppose the homeschooler says, "I want to keep up with the other kids who are doing algebra in school, but I'm just not sure I'm going to do that regularly on my own." Well, that's OK. What would help? Should we look into finding another adult to work with you? Would it be fun to meet regularly with another homeschooler who is working on algebra? Or would a schedule tacked up to the bulletin board help you remember that you wanted to work on this each week?

Sometimes people emphasize the *lack* of scheduling and fixed appointments in homeschooling, because this open-endedness is one of the things that makes homeschooling feel so different to kids who have spent years in school — no bells ringing, no one telling you you have to do math at this time. And it's true that we often want to stress the way in which homeschooling lets kids take advantage of whatever arises. If an unexpected opportunity comes up, that's great. If a book is so engrossing that you want to spend all day reading it, that's great too. But in stressing these benefits and these ways in which homeschooling is different from school, we may sometimes forget that the most crucial benefit, and difference, is that in homeschooling *you have control* — which means that you can make schedules, and plans, and appointments, *if you want to*. You can decide to work on certain things

It's very important to realize that much of what you're doing already has educational value (since school doesn't usually give kids credit for the things they willingly and eagerly pursue on their own). But it's just as important to realize that it's fine to need help and to ask for it.

If what a learner needs is fewer routines and appointments than she'd had before, homeschooling can allow for that. But if the learner craves more routine, or more of some other kind of help, than she has had, homeschooling can allow for that, too.

every day, or every week, if that's your goal (or if you think that doing that would help you reach a larger goal). You can make appointments to do things with other people. In busy families, for example, and maybe especially in families with many children of different ages, it can be helpful for parent and child to make an appointment together, to agree that at this specified time they will both clear a space and do a particular activity. The same kinds of appointments can be set up with people outside the family.

Marianne put essay writing on her list 3, but she put other kinds of writing on list 2. She wanted to work on writing, but wasn't sure she'd do it without something external set up to help it happen. I offered to meet with her once a week to write together, and we've now been doing that fairly regularly for several months. We don't do anything except sit and work on our own writing; so far, I haven't even seen what Marianne has written, although she sometimes talks about it. Marianne knows that other kids ask me to read and comment on their work and that that offer is available to her, too, but right now what is most useful to her is the regular appointment to write. That and a couple of good books on writing (particularly Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones*, which is very helpful to blocked or stuck writers) have apparently made a big difference to Marianne, even without anyone reading her work or making suggestions.

It's very easy for me to keep this appointment with Marianne, because I just do whatever writing I need or want to do anyway. In most cases it wouldn't be too hard for a homeschooler to find someone who would agree to meet regularly — lots of people wish they had more time for writing in their lives, too. It could be fun for two kids to meet together. And setting up appointments could work just as well with other activities — I mentioned the idea of working on math together, for example. For that matter, people don't need to be working on the same thing. Grace Llewellyn suggests that homeschoolers could meet with their friends who go to school, and while their friends are doing their homework, the homeschoolers could work on whatever they wanted to work on. Sometimes simply having companionship makes a difference, and if you make an appointment with a friend, you keep it because the friend is expecting you. (It's much like adults who often arrange to exercise with a friend.)

Just to be absolutely clear about this, this kind of scheduling, and this kind of adult help, is different from what's traditionally available to kids, because here the young person runs the show. We talk often in GWS about the difference between helping people reach their own goals and insisting that they reach goals that someone else has set for them. In Marianne's case, if I (or her mother) had set the goal of working on writing *for* Marianne, I might have come up with the idea of meeting regularly, and if I had succeeded in convincing Marianne to go along with the plan, our meetings might superficially look the same. But of course they would actually be very different. Once Marianne had the goal of working on writing, it was OK for her to want help reaching that goal — the unschooling philosophy, or the Holt philosophy, wouldn't have condemned her to working on it all by herself. Or, to put it another way, meeting regularly for specific purposes is by no means a contradiction or a violation of that philosophy — and I mention this because sometimes these issues seem confusing. To my mind, this philosophy (broad and sometimes hard to define though it may be) is about letting learners do what they feel they need to do in order to learn best, and homeschooling, ideally, can be in service to that. If what a learner needs is fewer routines and appointments than she'd had before, homeschooling can allow for that. But if the learner craves more routine, or more of some other kind of help, than she has had, homeschooling can allow for that too. Even when we aren't provided with schedules, we can create them ourselves, in whatever ways are useful. It seems to me that realizing this might be helpful both to kids who have been in school for a long time and are frightened by the open-endedness of homeschooling and to kids who have been homeschooling for a long time and are looking for more scheduling and outside commitment than they had when they were younger.

Resources & Recommendations

Exchanging Natural Objects

The Warren Family, Rocky Top Homeschool, Edna Bay, AK 99950-0040, writes:

We're a homeschooling family of 6. We live by the ocean in the rainforest of Southeast Alaska, and when out beachcombing we commonly find shells, feathers, neat rocks, interesting small flotsam; of all sorts, pretty leaves or cones, bones, teeth, etc.

We'd like to share some of them in return for things that are interesting from your area. We'll try to label the things we send and would appreciate knowing what you call the things you send, or common names for them. A small box of treasures from our latest expedition will be sent, on your request, and we'll trust that you'll send one from your area. If postage is a problem, say so and we'll enclose some.

Postcard Swap

Jesse Mulligan, 1512 Camino San Martin Ct Sal, Albuquerque NM 87121, writes:

I'd like to get together a large collection of postcards from every state to enhance the study of geography. If any readers would like to send me 5, 10, 20 or whatever number of postcards from their state, I will reciprocate with the same number from New Mexico. Please send them in an envelope rather than writing on the postcards themselves, since I may want to deal with duplicates I receive by using them as postcards.

Young Playwrights

Linda Segawa, Class Acting, 25207 358th SE, Ravensdale WA 98051, writes:

I am a single parent home teacher of seven years. I have decided to start my own business, a non-profit school of the dramatic arts for ages 10-teen called Class Acting. In this school of drama the young will do almost everything - building sets, acting, stage management, writing plays.

I would like to find more young playwrights. A young writer will receive $10 every time Class Acting produces his or her play, for as long as we use the play, and will receive royalties if we choose to publish the play in the future. A contract will be sent when the play is accepted.

Plays to be considered for the '93-'94 season and '94 summer session will have to be received by August 1, 1993. Any plays received after this date will be considered for the next season. There will be a prompt reply on every play received.

There are no strict rules for young children to follow, no length or time restrictions. If you are older and would like to follow a more prescribed method of playwriting there are many how to books in the library, or you may send a SASE and donation to help cover costs and I'll send you a Writer's Guideline.

Send script (any form as long as I can read it) or request to the address above. It will be exciting to read and produce plays written by the young. Our first play written by two fifth graders will be produced this summer.

Kids' Newsletter

Astra Taylor sent us a copy of *KARE, Kids for Animal Rights and the Environment*, a newsletter she edits. She writes that the newsletter is put out by homeschoolers and is written only by kids. "Starting with our next issue, KARE will not be limited to animal rights and the environment, but will also include articles on racial issues, animal rights, homeschooling, and more. We would love any kids (no adults) to write about any of the subjects we listed, or anything else appropriate. Book reviews are also appreciated." Subscriptions are $10 for four issues from KARE/Astra Taylor, 3000 Danielsville Rd, Athens GA 30601.

From *Dancing Puppet* Author

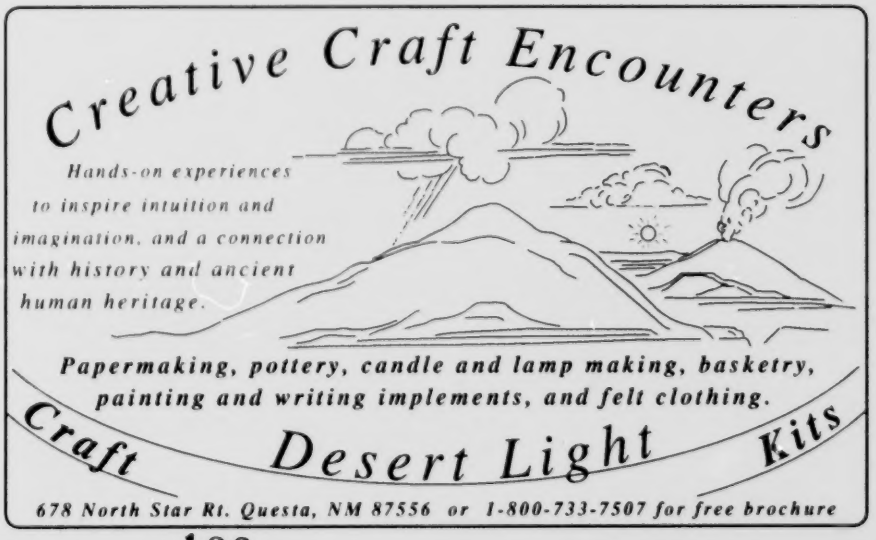
Doreen D'Eath, author of The Dancing Puppet Theatre, *writes:*

I savored all the articles in GWS #92, like those in so many previous issues, that gave me such wonderful support to continue homeschooling and feel that I am among kindred souls. I can't tell you how touched I was to read Mary Van Doren's review of *The Dancing Puppet Theatre*. It was extremely perceptive and very well-written.

I would like to set the record straight on the two minor concerns that Mary had, as I feel that they are important points. I agree that "responding with enthusiasm" is a better choice of words than "praising." However, even enthusiasm can be phony and excessive. I think that, despite the words, we are saying the same thing, and that perhaps the word we really want is "appreciate." Too often adults have a set idea of what a child's creation should look like and they either respond with disappointment and empty praise, or they want to "fix" it. Sensitive appreciation gives a caring, supportive message.

As to the white faces on the people puppets, I must admit that as an artist, I take certain things for granted about painting techniques, and it looks like I should have explained procedures more thoroughly to avoid the misunderstanding that Mary had. In our culturally sensitive times I would not want to go on record as having written that all people puppets will be painted white! Simply, what I meant was that when modeling with plaster of Paris, there is no need to add a coat of white primer to seal it when dry. The plaster can be left in its original white state and can be painted over in *any* color, if desired. White is the best color for painting over as all the colors will show up better on it.

I thank Mary for pointing out these two misunderstandings and I promise to elaborate in the next printing of the book.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Low-Income Ideas

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These are then donated to a local Catholic College library, and are available for checkout by homeschoolers.

I don't know how sympathetic your local school district is, but you might try to find a sympathetic teacher or administrator and see how they can help you - even if it just an outline of what a child should know in the first grade, second grade, etc. You could take that outline and use library resources to teach around it. Also, the school districts in the Denver metro area all have places where they have used items for purchase. We have purchased furniture this way, as well as books. They are usually priced very low, or free. Many libraries also have used book sales, with books costing 25¢ - $1. Garage sales are also another place we have gotten many books for very little. We got a 50-volume set of the Harvard Classics for 10¢ per volume.

The local newspaper will give us roll ends of newsprint for free. These are great for writing and drawing. You might try yours. They told us we could come back every six months or so for another one. These rolls actually contain quite a bit of paper.

Our state homeschooling group has an annual curriculum fair where many people sell used books for very little. You might check with your local group and see what is available in that area.

Since your children all really want to homeschool, I might also suggest that you try starting a service business that they could be involved in. For example, if you started a house- or window-cleaning service, they could come with you to assist you in cleaning. They might not be a great help at first, but since you were working for them (i.e. so they could continue homeschooling) they would be very motivated to be on their best behavior. ... I think that your children working and contributing to the situation would be very good for their self-esteem. You might have to be careful how much you did this and when (maybe afternoons, evenings, and weekends) so as not to get in trouble with child labor laws. You might also have to overcome some reluctance of people to hire you with the children around, but you might give them a money-back offer if they are not satisfied. You might save some money from such a business to use in something that requires more investment, such as making crafts. I feel that any business experience is a great way for children to learn about such things. It is very easy to make any bookkeeping involved into practical math lessons, and they also learn about keeping the customers satisfied, marketing, and many other practical skills.

Additions to Directory

Here are *all* the additions and changes that have come in since our complete 1993 Directory was published in GWS #90. Our Directory is *not* a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a (H), the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses, that person is in the Directory (check here *and* in GWS #90). We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are not in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out.

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AZ — John PEACEMAKER (Tiffany/75) 5029 W Harmont Dr, Glendale 85302

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Add to Directory of Organizations:

Helpful Schools:

Cooperative Learning Center, 454 Papaya St, Vista CA 92083 619-726-3020

The Learning Community, Inc., PO Box 5177, Herndon VA 22070

Homeschooling Groups:

MN — South Metro Families for Home Education, 17020 Hamilton Dr, Lakeville 55044

NY — Tri County Homeschoolers, 130 Blanchard Rd, Stoneypoint 10980; 914-429-5156

TX — Houston Alternative Education Alliance, 12811 Ivy Forest Dr, Cypress 77429

Address Changes:

CA — Home School Assoc of CA (formerly Northern CA Homeschool Assoc), PO Box 231236, Sacramento 95823-0403

CO — Northern Colorado Homeschool Assoc, c/o Michalak, 12150 Rist Canyon Rd, Bellvue 80512; 303-493-2243

OH - Home Education League of Parents, Suite 131, 3208 Cahuenga Blvd West, Los Angeles CA 90068; 1-800-582-9061 (this is now a national group with local chapters around the country)

OR — Oregon Home Education Network, 4470 SW Hall Blvd #286, Beaverton 97005; 503-321-5166

PA — Pennsylvania Home Education Network, 285 Allegheny St, Meadville PA 16335; 412-265-2734

National — National Homeschool Assoc, 513-772-9580 (new phone # only)

Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Please try to write to the kids who are already listed before sending in your own name. When writing to pen-pals, be sure to put your own name and address on your letter, not just on your envelope.

To be listed here, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. FLETCHER, 1159 S Taylor, Oak Park IL 60304: Catherine (11) skating, ballet, horseback riding; Becky (8) animals, biking, pen-pals ••• Rachel SEALFON (6) 34 Sidney Pl, Brooklyn NY 11201; reading, writing, dolls ••• LAIN, 1525 Old House Rd, Pasadena CA 91107: Andrea (13) gardening, reading, Super NES; Angela (7) swimming, Barbies, TV ••• Charlotte GREENBLATT (9) 1935 31 St, San Diego CA 92102; ballet, piano, writing ••• Taylor, 3000 Danielsville Rd, Athens GA 30601: Sunny (11) singing, fortune telling, earth; Alex (8) playmobile, legos, computers ••• Eva KITZMAN (8) 455 London Rd, Deerfield WI 53531; dogs, piano, ballet ••• David GUTIERREZ (10) 7658 Barton, El Paso TX 79915; stamps, piano, drawing ••• DALE, Rt 1 Box 435, Spencee IN 47460: Macey (10) sports, reading, cooking; Anna (8) animals, art, gymnastics ••• Elizabeth WEINTROB (12) 4604 N Tillotson Av, Muncie IN 47304; pen-pals, ballet, bikes ••• JOHNSON, HC71 Box 255, Windy KY 42655: Lonnie (12) baseball cards, knives, animals; Julie (11) dogs, arrowheads, drawing; Crystal (11) dogs, art, babies; Kayla (10) cats, Barbies, math ••• Lena ASPENGREN (6) 276 Old Kingston Rd, New Paltz NY 12561; animals, art, outdoors ••• Michael FORTUNATO (11) 21 Jan Marie Dr, Plymouth MA 02360; archery, skateboarding, hockey ••• Laura BRION (11) 8 Mary Bee Ln, Sherman CT 06784; farming, animals, sewing ••• Emma CREIGHTON (8) RFD 1 Box 35, Deer Isle ME 04627; horses, drawing, nature ••• Jared HOPE (11) 2000 Bonita Av, Las Vegas NV 89104; basketball, animals, music ••• Micaella KINZLI, 2466 Whitehall Cir, Winter Park FL 32792; gymnastics, art, cooking ••• Mona WEINER (11) 341 E 5th St, New York NY 10003; soccer, basketball, playwriting

When You Write Us

Please - (1) Put separate items of business on separate sheets of paper.

(2) Put your name and address at the top of each letter.

(3) If you ask questions, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

(4) Tell us if it's OK to publish your letter, and whether to use your name with the story. We edit letters for space and clarity.

(5) If you're writing to one of us in particular, write "GWS" or "Holt Associates" on the envelope in addition to the individual's name. There are several offices at our address, and mail without an organization name often gets misdelivered.

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Use this form to send us a new entry or a substantial address change to be run in the next available issue of GWS.

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Or in the additions in this issue? Yes ___ No ___

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NEW Massachusetts Homeschool Legal Fact Sheet for parents/schools. $1, MHLA, PO Box 1976G, Lenox MA 01240.

"Home Education Magazine is my hands-down favorite!" Dee Sanchez in New Mexico Family Home Educators Connection, April, 1993. "This is one of the few I can heartily recommend." Debra Eisenmann in Ozark Lore's The Networker, March, 1993. "This is among our favorite magazines..." Shari Henry in Minnesota Homeschoolers Alliance The Grapevine, March, 1993. Find out why so many people are saying such nice things about us! $15 per year with our FREE 24-page catalog from Home Education Press, PO Box 1083, Tonasket, WA 98855; 509-486-1351.

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HOME TUTOR - Family spending one year on an island in Brazil, starting September 1993, seeks English-speaking tutor for 9-year-old daughter. Individual or family will be considered. Please write Isabelle Hunter, 56 Warren St, Plainville, MA 02762.

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State:

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New Books in Our Spring/Summer Catalog!

Real Lives: 11 Teenagers Who Don't Go to School, edited by Grace Llewellyn. Wonderful in-depth essays by eleven teenagers about what it's like to learn and grow outside of school. Some of the writers have homeschooled for many years; others have only recently begun. For anyone who wants to learn about homeschooling from the kids themselves. #1772, $14.95 + post.

Alternatives in Education, edited by Mark and Helen Hegener. Informative essays about alternative schools, the politics of education, Waldorf and Montessori, homeschooling, and higher education. This is a useful guide to the choices people have and the philosophies that underlie each option. #1774, $16.75 + post.

Native American Testimony, ed. by Peter Nabokov. Back in print! A beautiful collection of first-person accounts, including Native Americans' perspectives on the arrival of white people, and much more. #1776, $15 + post.

For shipping charges, see chart on page 17.

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Larla Maloney is among those who write for this issue's Focus, "Making Changes in Homeschooling," pages 19-23.

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There's no such thing as homeschooling. That is, there's no one thing that you can point to and say, "That, and only that, is homeschooling." Despite the fact that there are, of course, many common threads in people's experiences of it, all homeschooling really means is that the kids don't go to school. Once that is true, what happens afterwards is incredibly varied. We often acknowledge this diversity of approach when we explain homeschooling to others: "There are as many ways to do it as there are families" is a common line. But diversity of approach can exist *within* families, too. What works one year may not work the following year. What works for one child may not work for another. And, most important, if something isn't working, it can change.

For this issue's Focus, we asked several young GWS readers to write about how their homeschooling has changed over time. As the responses began coming in, I found myself thinking that this might be the most important Focus we've ever done, simply because if families can truly *feel* the flexibility of homeschooling, many challenges and problems can then be addressed. If a particular textbook isn't working, there's nothing to stop a family from trying another or experimenting with not using textbooks at all. If a family starts out following a strict, school-like schedule and finds that too confining, they can loosen up. If, on the other hand, a loose schedule doesn't address the child's desire to do more focused work as she gets older, more precise schedules can be drawn up. It may be difficult (or sometimes impossible) for schools to make changes, but as the writers in this issue imply, change is what homeschooling is all about.

I was encouraged and heartened by these kids' responses. If an ideal educational set-up is one that is fluid, adaptable, changing as the child's needs change, then these kids are certainly lucky, because that's exactly what they've got. And because homeschooling involves constant change, it also involves constant reflection and introspection and the power to act on what one discovers. How many kids in school have the opportunity to think about what they really need and then to make changes where necessary? Or to make changes as a *way* of figuring out what they need? How many schoolteachers are as free to abandon what doesn't work as homeschooling parents are? There's much to celebrate about the way that homeschooling children, together with their parents, are trying things, reflecting on them, trying something else, and getting to know themselves and their learning styles in the process. — Susannah Sheffer

Office News & Announcements

[SS:] At press time, we're in the middle of an early July heat wave, but as you read this, you're probably gearing up for fall. Some state newsletters publish a "not-back-to-school" issue around this time, and some support groups plan picnics or other activities with this theme, as a way of countering the "back to school" enthusiasm (and hype) directed at most American families, or as a way of claiming some part of it for themselves. It makes sense that, for many, this time of year is a time of thinking, planning, and being especially sensitive to the pressure both parents and children may feel as friends and neighbors focus on the start of the school year.

We don't have a "not-back-to-school" theme in this issue, exactly (well, in one sense that's the theme of very issue!), but I think much of the material you'll find in these pages is appropriate to that mood. The story in the "News & Reports" section about how homeschoolers in Massachusetts successfully negotiated for a better district policy, and the interview with a cooperative and respectful superintendent in Pennsylvania, should be helpful to those for whom August means "filing notice of intent time" or "writing our proposal time." The stories about groups organized by teenagers are inspiring and full of ideas for families with older kids, especially those who are feeling overwhelmed by the thought of teaching high school subjects or meeting their kids' growing social needs. And as you plan for the coming year and evaluate what is working well and what could be changed, you might want to read through the stories in the Focus section on making changes in one's homeschooling.

We've just wrapped up the process of selecting books for our fall catalog. As always, we're excited to be able to offer so many great new books, and at the same time we're sad about several of the books that we had to cut. Sometimes our favorites go out of print, and sometimes a book just isn't selling well enough for us to keep it in. Other times we simply have to cut old books to make room for new ones. You'll see a list of the books we've cut in this issue's book review section. If there are any you've been meaning to buy, now is the time.

We were particularly sorry to see Herbert Kohl's *The Question is College* go out of print. This is a book that I recommend all the time to teenagers and their families, since it's such a thoughtful discussion of whether college is the right choice and how middle class families, who tend to expect kids to go to college, are affected when a child chooses not to go. It's also a wonderful guide to thinking about what else to do - travel, work, apprenticeships. There are other books that question whether college is necessary, but none as insightful as this one, so I hope GWS readers will try to get it from their libraries when these issues arise in your family.

Because we are always pressed for space in the catalog (as in the magazine!), there are often books that we like but don't add in a given year. Three such books that we want to mention this year - because they may be of interest to some of you - are *Birth Stories*, by GWS reader Jane Dwinell, *Challenging the Giant*, edited by Mary Leue, and *Legacy of Trust: Life After the Sudbury Valley School Experience*, by Daniel Greenberg and Mimsy Sadofsky. *Birth Stories* is about Jane's experience working in a birth center that lets women decide, rather than be told, what is best for them. It will be of interest to women who are planning to have children or are already pregnant, of course, but Jane also suggests that it would interest teenagers who are thinking of becoming nurses or midwives. It's available from Bergin & Garvey, 88 Post Rd West, Westport CT 06881. *Challenging the Giant* is a collection of some of the best articles from *Skole*, the journal of alternative education, and it would be especially interesting to people who are studying the history and philosophy of alternative schools and the various challenges involved in running them. It's available from Down-to-Earth Books, 72 Philip St, Albany NY 12202. *Legacy of Trust* is a study of how graduates of the Sudbury Valley School fare in adult life. Readers of *Free at Last*, which we currently sell, know that SVS has no curricular requirements, doesn't care at what age kids learn to read, gives no tests, etc. For this reason, there are some parallels between the experience of its students and the experience of homeschoolers, and *Legacy of Trust* can be useful to people who are trying to show that kids don't need conventional schooling to become happy and successful adults. Available from Sudbury Valley School Press, 2 Winch St, Framingham MA 01701.

We frequently get calls or letters from new homeschoolers who are particularly concerned about one specific issue - testing, or late reading, or teenagers, for example. We tell them that GWS prints a lot of material on these subjects, and we encourage them to subscribe, but we've often felt that just subscribing isn't enough, because there's so much that's *already* been printed in the back issues, and people who only begin subscribing now won't immediately get access to stories that could really help them. So, lately we've begun to direct people to the back issues as well, and rather than just saying, "The back issues would be helpful," we offer to pick out the issues that we know have material on the person's concern. For example, if someone calls and wants to know about older readers, we ask how many back issues she can afford and then promise to choose the ones with relevant stories. Since back issues are only $2 for subscribers (as opposed to $4.50 for nonsubscribers), it makes sense for a person in this situation to subscribe first. Our goal is to get the helpful material to such people as efficiently as possible, and that's why we offer to do the selecting when the prospect of reading through all the issues seems daunting. So, if you are a new homeschooler, or a new subscriber to GWS with a particular area of interest or concern, you're welcome to ask us to choose the appropriate back issues for you. Also, if you talk to new homeschoolers, as I know many of you often do, and you hear them expressing a common concern, maybe you can mention this offer to them as well.

A while ago, we wrote about the issue of readers borrowing their issues of GWS rather than taking out their own subscriptions. We said that this is always something of a dilemma for us because we want our material to be available to all who can benefit from it, and yet in order to keep publishing, we need the income that your subscriptions bring. A related dilemma is the one that arises when readers let their subscriptions lapse because their children are grown or they no longer have much time to read or they're just feeling confident enough not to need GWS anymore. John Holt discussed this in the magazine years ago, saying something like, "Even when you don't need us anymore, we still need you." If you're considering letting your subscription lapse for any of these reasons, one thing we ask you to bear in mind is that your subscription money pays for more than just your six issues a year. As long as we're in business - and it's your subscriptions and book orders that keep us in business - we're able to do all sorts of other valuable things for which we *don't* get paid. We provide information, at no charge, to callers who want to find homeschoolers in their area or other kinds of contacts. We spend a lot of time on the phone, and still more time writing letters, helping people with all sorts of homeschooling and parenting issues. We help homeschoolers find apprenticeships. We provide information to people who are researching homeschooling at universities and to reporters who are covering it. And as you know, we emphasize the kind of homeschooling that *doesn't* look just like school. Again, we don't get paid for doing these things, but if you value them and want us to keep doing them, the best way to ensure that is to keep your subscription current, encourage others to do the same, and patronize the bookstore as well. Thanks to all of you who understand and appreciate the importance of this.

News & Reports

"Newsletters to Clinton" Project

Some of you may have heard about, or participated in, the "Newsletters to Clinton" project, in which homeschooling support groups worked to inform the president about homeschooling. The May 1993 issue of the Tennessee Homeschooling Families newsletter contains this update from coordinator Anne Wasserman:

The response to this project was, as far as I was concerned, outstanding. We had newsletters from Utah, New York, Nevada, California, North Carolina, Florida, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Tennessee, Colorado, Washington, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, West Virginia, Minnesota, Maryland, Delaware, and Maine. Also *Growing Without Schooling*, *Home Education Magazine*, *The Teaching Home*, *the Moore Report*, *Home Schooling Today*, and *Under the Apple Tree* graciously sent copies of their publications. Mr. Jerry Mintz sent copies of his alternative schools publication, *Aero-Gramme*, as well as other alternative school publications. There were three cover letters, copies of which I have enclosed with this letter. ...

In talking to several people and due to our (at least to me) overwhelming response, we were thinking of making this project a [semi-] annual event. Once in January and once again in June. Any comments to this idea would be most welcome.

Some excerpts from the cover letters:

First, from Mary Griffith, editor of the Northern California Homeschool Association newsletter (now Home School Association of California):

... As homeschoolers, we are actively concerned with the education of our children and the range of educational choices available to us. Perhaps less obviously, we are also seriously concerned about the educational choices available to all Americans and the consequences of those choices.

We are disturbed by the trend in recent education reform efforts (America 2000, for example) toward increased reliance upon standardized curricula and testing. However voluntary such standards may be, in practice they will effectively narrow the choice of educational programs available to American students, and thereby limit the possibilities for success for increasing numbers of students.

The one principle that our very diverse and opinionated membership can agree upon is that there is no right way to educate all children. We are individuals, with differing situations and personalities, and it is foolish to believe that a single educational approach can be effective for all of us.

When you consider educational initiatives for the federal government during the next few years, we urge you to support those programs which allow the most flexibility to meet the individual needs of the students to be served and which let the people working most directly with students make the decision about how best to meet those needs.

And from Earl M. Bunday of Minnesota:

... I write now to indicate my support for government policies that protect or expand the existing liberty of parents to choose homeschooling as one of several choices for educating their children. I have been closely acquainted with homeschooling parents since working as a law-student intern for lawyers representing homeschoolers in the summer of 1988. In the succeeding years, I have attended large homeschooling conventions in Minnesota (four times), Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, California (twice), and Washington state. At all these meetings, I have encountered caring, concerned parents eager to be and eager for their children to become lifelong learners. I have also met a number of exceptionally bright, responsible, and well-adjusted children from families of quite ordinary parents - except for their decision to homeschool. I am now a parent myself, and a participant in an ongoing nationwide electronic town meeting on homeschooling carried by the Prodigy electronic bulletin board system. I can testify that homeschoolers throughout the country are thoughtful, involved voters and taxpayers. What they have in common is a commitment to good education for their children. Other than that, they represent the full diversity of America, with every national and religious heritage I've ever heard of represented among their number, and with growing local support groups in all regions of this country.

I understand that your campaign issued a position statement before your election saying that you saw no federal role in regulating home education. I would hope that in addition, if labor union political pressure or other forces brought about state-level attempts to restrict the liberty of homeschoolers, you would use all appropriate means, including what homeschooled president Theodore Roosevelt called the "bully pulpit" of the presidential office, to resist those attempts to infringe parental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. ....

Finally, from Amanda Bergson-Shilcock of Pennsylvania:

I am sixteen years old, and I have never been to school. I am what is commonly known as a homeschooler, although my life hardly resembles the picture that that word brings to mind. I am involved in many activities and spend large portions of my time out in the "real world," including a trip with my violin quintet to play for visitors at the White House in December of 1991.

However, this letter is not to talk about me. Rather, it is to remind you that there is an alternative to public or private school and that many people are taking advantage of it. As you will see by the enclosed newsletters and magazines, homeschoolers are a very diverse group of people. From those who school-at-home to the John Holt-style "unschoolers," there are many different versions of homeschooling. There are homeschoolers in every state in the U.S., and we represent virtually every religious, ethnic, political, and racial group. We are traditional and nontraditional families, in rural, suburban, and urban neighborhoods. We are novices, old hands, and somewhere in between. We are rich, poor, and middle class. Some are outspoken and some are more private, some are stay-at-home and some work outside the home. In short, we are EveryAmerican.

I am writing to ask you to see us as EveryAmerican and to recognize that we are not fanatics advocating homeschooling for everyone. We want only for you, and indeed all Americans, to recognize that here is one more choice, one more way for education to happen. ...

Negotiating District Policy

Brad White of Massachusetts writes:

Until five years ago, the Bourne school system and the home educators had related in an uneasy truce. The existing homeschool policy was not enforced with the dominating attitude projected in its

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wording, and the soon-to-retire superintendent was content to maintain peace. The homeschooling families were on their own.

When I say the existing policy had a dominating attitude, i am referring to how the policy reflected the attitude of the designers. Massachusetts law states that homeschoolers must gain approval from their local school district before implementing a homeschooling program, and the local district decides how approval will be obtained. The local district has enough latitude to ignore homeschoolers completely or to set a policy that pushes the limit of the homeschooler's tolerance. In addition, a district may have a written policy that is enforced differently with each administrator. I have heard some districts have no written policy at all. The current legal opinion, known as the "Charles Decision," gives power equally to school officials and parents to negotiate what is in the best interests of the children involved.

At that time in Bourne, five years ago, the policy had been designed by town counsel to make every aspect of home education subject to the control of the superintendent. The policy allowed surprise home visits, required a curriculum and schedule that closely duplicated those of a school environment, and had an evaluation process that required parents to save and present all work done by each child for the entire year. The retiring superintendent did not think all this work was necessary, and delegated the supervision of homeschoolers to a principal who was supportive of parents "who are willing to make such a commitment to their children."

The current superintendent (who arrived late in 1988) was eager to awaken the sleeping educational system with an infusion of modern learning techniques. The effects of the recession were upon us, tensions increased, and current policies and practices were examined thoroughly. Many teachers and other groups were offended by the new hard line (layoffs, policy and financial changes), and the home educators no longer remained unnoticed. The new assistant superintendent began to enforce the homeschooling policy to the letter, presenting it as law instead of as a local guideline and making unreasonable requests of families who tried to cooperate. Those who stood to maintain their rights were threatened with legal action, and the superintendent's desire for "establishing the best education for all Bourne students" (otherwise known as "control") emerged.

The first standoff, in the fall of 1991, concerned the practice of home visits. One family decided to fight the visits, arguing that they violated the Constitutional protection regarding illegal search and seizure (4th amendment). With the help of the Home School Legal Defense Association, the family presented legal and common sense arguments to the school board and the policy was changed to eliminate that practice. However, in response to the administration, the school board also revised the policy to add additional control through excess supervision of homeschoolers.

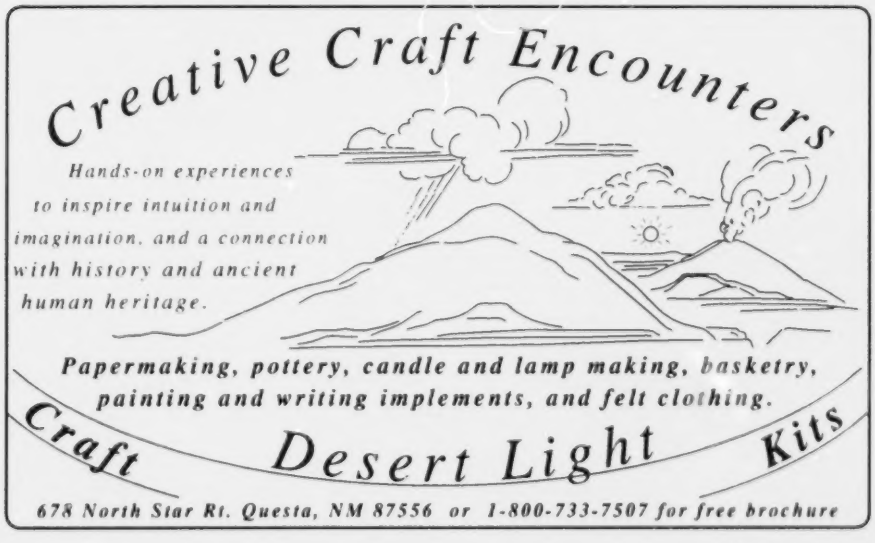
The situation deteriorated until it seemed a legal battle in court would be the only way to achieve a solution for the dozen families affected. Within inches of going to court, the homeschoolers made a final appeal to negotiate a peaceful settlement by designing a new policy that included input from the families. We made the request directly to the school board during a hearing regarding a family that was appealing the administration's disapproval of their homeschooling. About 75 homeschoolers attended to support this Bourne family. We finally had the school officials' attention, not because they cared about homeschooling but because they saw the wisdom of not wasting the town's money on a court battle they might not win. An ad hoc committee was formed to reach a solution. It consisted of three homeschool parents, three school board members, and the superintendent, who was not very pleased with the board's decision.

The school board gave us only four months to complete the negotiation process. We had to organize, define our purpose and goals, learn the politics of our local democratic process, and continue to educate the school board about home education. Because of the upcoming election we saw the value of continuing to have a high profile. Many people in the community, including school teachers, openly supported home education once they became informed, through the media, of its unique success.

The negotiation process was truly a growing experience for us. We called "home school experts," but we found the best they could offer us was to coach us through (only because the school board would not allow outside interference to affect local policy). This was an awakening experience, as we had never before considered that our decision to homeschool was as much a political as an educational decision. It was essential that we knew our rights and were established in our conviction to stand up for them, instead of hoping that others would fight for us. The superintendent consistently attempted a divide-and-conquer strategy in his bet to prove that homeschoolers were self-centered society dropouts, unwilling to join any group cause. We had to discover our unity without losing our diversity, and we made mistakes in the process. We had to decide where the lines of concession would be drawn, and some families were unable to continue with us.

The negotiation process worked better when:

- the school officials learned that we care about our children, not just about protecting parents' rights
- they realized that their policy was not law
- they learned that we knew the law better than they did, but wanted peace anyway (as citizens of the town, we don't want to sue ourselves or our neighbors)
- they realized they were spending money from the school budget to do the work assigned to the Department of Social Services; this seemed to lessen their enthusiasm about paying someone on the school budget to supervise our homes
- they saw that having a minimally restrictive policy with an atmosphere of cooperation (as we had had under the prior superintendent) worked better than the distrustful atmosphere of authoritarian scrutiny
- we discovered committee members were more interested in the business aspects of education (how to save money) than in the essence of education, so we abandoned any goal of persuading them to respect home education
- we faced the fact that we represent to them less than two percent of the student population in town, and we overlooked their indifference to having a meaningful discussion about education with us
- we realized that this was their policy, not ours, so we were helping them (both sides saw that the deepest problems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could only be solved at the federal or state level, so let's just get along)

- we did not allow ourselves to be provoked emotionally, nor to get caught up in details, and we only discussed past issues when they were constructive to future plans
- we explained how each benefit that we wanted would simplify their job or cost less
- we asked for some things we didn't care about, so that they could say no and retain control
- the superintendent, finally tired of our persistence, asked, "What do you want?" Then we offered to write a new policy.

Our biggest mistake was helping someone we thought was pro-home education get elected to the school board in 1991. This person had been working with homeschooling families for years in town. Being a certified teacher, she had a business set up to assist both school children and homeschoolers. She was appointed to the ad hoc committee with us. We found that her goal all along had been to help homeschoolers duplicate standardized public education in their homes, rather than to promote the healthy, individualized learning that sets home education apart. We thought she would bring some sanity to the growing dilemma, but we were surprised to discover that she became the toughest adversary.

In March of 1993, we reached a compromise. The Bourne school district now has a written policy that demonstrates respect for home education while assuring school officials that they do not lose the power they feel they need. Under the new policy, parents who choose this alternative for educating their children will be given generous latitude in the design and evaluation of their program. As long as parents can demonstrate to officials a vision of planned exposure to academics, with some form of measured progress, approval will be granted without interference. We do not call it a victory yet, however, until the school officials maintain the principles of the policy for at least one year. We now wait and see.

What has been accomplished in Bourne could not have been possible without the vision and support of organizations like Holt Associates, HSLDA, Clonlara, the Mass. Home Learning Association, and the Mass. Home Organization of Parent Educators. They helped prepare us long before the battle emerged by providing encouragement and access to resources (such as GWS). HSLDA has the financial resources and legal clout to get any school official's attention. They helped us become and remain steadfast in our convictions through their experience with these issues, and they helped us laugh when we wanted to give up. Most of all, they were there before we needed them. We encourage all homeschool families to assist these groups (or your local support association), for the benefit of home education everywhere. We never would have guessed this would happen here, and the value of knowing people who can create unity without destroying diversity is priceless.

Calendar

September 3-5, 1993: Homeschool Family Camping Weekend at Camp Hanover near Mechanicsville, Virginia. Discussion groups and other activities. For info: Renee Pleasant, 804-233-2831 or Joan Cichon, 703-456-9822.

Sept. 17-19: Families Learning Together fall gathering at Camp Gwynn Valley near Brevard, NC. For info: SASE to FLT, 1017 Haymarket La, Wilmington NC 28412; 919-392-9103.

October 9-11: Texas Advocates for Freedom in Education (TAFFIE) statewide homeschooling weekend in Austin. Workshops, family field trips, social activities. For information: Tam Voynick, 6502 Bradley Dr, Austin TX 78723.

We are happy to print announcements of major homeschooling events, but we need plenty of notice. Deadline for GWS #95 (events in November or later) is September 10th. Deadline for GWS #96 (events in January or later) is November 10th.

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Interview:
Why This Superintendent Supports Homeschooling

[SS:] In GWS #84, Ellie Litwack wrote about the "mutually respectful" and cooperative relationship she has with her local superintendent, Dr. John DeFlaminis. We spoke with Dr. DeFlaminis, whose district is the Radnor Township District in Pennsylvania, to learn more about why he believes in being helpful to homeschoolers. (For more on cooperation between schools and homeschoolers, see GWS #85, 86, 89, 91.)

How many homeschooling families do you have in your district?

At the moment, seven families.

What kind of interaction do you have with them?

I like to talk with them as they begin the homeschooling process. I give them a copy of the regulations as well as some clear guidelines, things that have been printed that make the requirements clearer, although there's quite a network of homeschoolers so most are pretty informed by the time they begin. Then we meet again once the objectives and the program have been laid out, and after that I try to meet with the families once a year so that I have an idea of what's going on.

I know that you've been very welcoming to families who want access to school facilities or activities. Do you offer this access first, or do families ask you for it?

Both. I always say in my opening remarks, if there's anything we can do to work with you, please do feel free to ask.

What's your rationale for being so welcoming?

These are children that are entitled to go to public school if they want to go. In their case, their parents choose not to send them. My perception is that depending on the family, you can probably provide most elements of a good educational program without using the public schools, but there may be some things we do that the family can't always provide - say, a music program or an intramural athletic program. I assume that my desire and the parents' desire is to provide a full range of educational opportunities. We are required by law to provide books that homeschoolers need, but we're not *required* to allow homeschoolers to come in and out of programs whenever they want. I have an understanding with the principals that we'll do it to the extent that it doesn't disrupt that program, and I explain that to the homeschoolers. But their needs are the most critical issue.

I'm interested to know what would constitute being disruptive. Some homeschoolers are told that their child's participation in a school program would be disruptive, and it's not always easy to see why that would be so.

For us, disruptive would be - well, if a homeschooler wants to take something in music or phys ed, those activities tend to happen at the beginning or the end of the school day, so they're easier to access. The time issue is much less intense. But any child coming in for one period in the middle of a day is going to have to get there on time, otherwise the class will start and someone's going to walk in after it's started. It's harder for us to be flexible about that than it would be for a private art class, for example. Schools are among the most tightly controlled places in our society, unfortunately. It's difficult to maintain some order unless you do it that way. If we were to permit the kind of freedom that a homeschooling family might have, we couldn't educate 850 children in one building. So those kinds of things, like coming in late, would be disruptions. In the scheme of things, though, I wish we could be a lot more flexible.

Sometimes homeschoolers get the sense that something a bit more abstract is meant by "disruptive." For example, some school officials seem to worry that if a child is able to come in, take one class, and then leave, that will make the other children resentful or jealous.

They're worried about starting a pattern that leads more people to homeschool. I don't worry about that. I think it's a very hard thing to decide you're going to homeschool your child. I think when it's done well, and when parents are well-motivated, that it almost borders on the ideal. Not completely, but it gets very close to the ideal, where experiences are provided for an individual child that can never be provided in an institutional setting. But I lived in Louisville, Kentucky when people were homeschooling to avoid desegregation, and they were packing 10 kids into a garage and doing things that I didn't think were ideal. Still, I think when you have wonderful things going on in homeschooling, they ought to be held up for what they are - wonderful examples - whether they happen in our schools or not.

The situation of a homeschooler taking a class or two wouldn't be disruptive here, but I don't know the circumstances in other districts. It's true that given the choice for the more flexible alternative, I'm sure there *would* be a lot of kids who would prefer that, so in that sense I can see that they might envy the homeschooler coming in. But in fact, the way that restructuring is occurring in schools, I think we are moving away from the clock, from the timed, egg crate delivery system. I see us moving toward a much more flexible set of learning and program alternatives. We're trying to do it, and we're seeing that those options work quite successfully. I think the one thing we can count on is change, and it's happening. I asked one of the homeschooling families in my district to come in and present to the board, and I thought that was a wonderful thing, because we can learn from the individualized programs that these children have.

Yes, I was going to ask - what do you think people in schools can learn from homeschoolers?

I think these days running public schools is very difficult. The politics of schooling has become very, very difficult. It has forced people away from a focus on children's needs to a focus on the bottom line. School systems need to change, and I think good systems are changing all the time. The problem is that we're always torn between attending to individual needs and offering programs that meet the needs of larger groups. But because as I said, I think homeschooling, because it is absolutely individualized to the needs of each student, is close to ideal, I think we can learn from that.

A big part of achievement is motivation, and that's the second thing we can learn. The homeschooling program can potentially be more motivating because it is built on the child's interests. When a homeschooling family has a child who loves to write, and they connect that child with an adult who loves to write and who can take an interest in the child's work, that's wonderful, and I wish we could make that available to all students.

Yes, I think it would be an interesting challenge, just given that you've framed the question that way, to think of how to give kids in school access to the same kinds of apprenticeships that many homeschoolers have.

One thing we've done is, we're going to have personalized IEPs [Individualized Education Programs] for every kid in the high school, which means that every student will have a chance to sit down with an adult who will focus on what that student's interests are.

The third thing I think schools can learn from homeschoolers is the difference between family and system. When families make a decision that they're going to learn together, that's a very positive thing. The number one predictor of student achievement is parents' expectations, so what could be better than to have parents closely involved and communicating their positive expectations every day?

The difficulty with all this is, we have artifacts in public school systems that don't necessarily make sense today. It's harder to change something that's embedded in the system than to change something at home. In an institution, once you adopt a practice it's hard to change it. If it happens to be a good practice, that's wonderful, but if it's a bad practice and if it's not constantly being examined, that's not wonderful.

I'm wondering if you also learn from homeschoolers specific things about teaching practices, or kids' learning. I'm thinking of some of the unusual ways that kids learn to read in homeschool settings, for example. John Holt wrote years ago that ideally, home schools could be seen as laboratories, places where interesting experiments were going on and from which schools could learn.

I think you're right, but I don't see that flow, not at the level you're talking about or that John Holt was talking about. I might learn things on a macro level, but to learn the sorts of things you're describing, I'd have to be much more intimate with the families. I'd have to know a lot more than I know now. Right now, I don't get as involved as I'd have to get to understand the nuances of that kind of teaching, either by seeing it or by having it described to me.

I would love to think about how that flow could happen, because homeschoolers are often accused of not caring about the larger community or about kids who are in school, and in actuality they might have important insights to share with, say, school teachers who are working with particular kids.

In my experience, homeschoolers do care about the community, and they have embedded their children in the life of the community. But it's true that there isn't the kind of exchange you're talking about. I would like to see homeschoolers know about the kinds of cutting edge things we're doing in the schools, too.

Yes, I didn't mean it would go only one way. But sometimes it's easier for homeschoolers to read about new things going on in schools than vice-versa.

What do you think homeschoolers can do to make for a smoother relationship between themselves and school officials?

I don't think school is the only place to learn. Public schools are not the only answer, nor are formal school systems.

I really am convinced that there is a predisposition that can greatly affect the relationship between homeschoolers and school districts. If you anticipate that you're going to have a problem, you're probably going to do some things that will create a problem. I have a recent example of a family who sent an advocate to me rather than talking to me directly. They didn't want to comply with various requirements, they sent in old material, not material that I need to feel secure about what's happening. Because in the end, I am certifying that a certain process is happening, I'm taking that responsibility, and I take the education of every student seriously. So when someone starts by creating a tension that doesn't need to be there, it isn't helpful.

What would you say to other superintendents who are not as inclined to be open-minded, or to be supportive of homeschoolers?

I don't think school is the only place to learn. Ideally, I'd like to see learning go into the whole community, with schools being a place for kids to come into and go out of when they want to. I think there are lots of ways to get there. Public schools are not the only answer, nor are formal school systems.

There are homeschoolers around the country who would say that you are really exemplary, that not many other superintendents share that attitude.

I don't think I'm exemplary. I think most superintendents are educable. They may not be as familiar with homeschooling, or have read John Holt, as I have, but I think they could learn, if the family approaches them with the understanding that we're all human, that we're all concerned about the children, and that this family chooses homeschooling but that doesn't have to denigrate the public schools. The family who wants their child to have access to school programs could say, we choose to homeschool, but my child would really benefit from these aspects of public school, and I'd like to have him or her participate, but I don't want to create a disruption.

I suppose some of my colleagues would absolutely disagree with me. A lot of it has to do with what you believe about schooling and learning. If I knew a colleague was absolutely refusing to help homeschoolers, I would speak to him about that.

We've been talking about whether homeschoolers would be disruptive. What about the other side - John Holt suggested that a child who came in to take one class could actually have a positive influence, because the other kids would see that here was a child who had chosen to do this particular thing.

I think that could possibly be true. That's the other side of it, that goes back to the motivation issue. If someone's motivated to come in and take a class when they don't have to, that could be a very positive influence. Also, kids have to go into a world where people are different, and I think the chance to interact with and get to know a homeschooler is a healthy thing. After all, we take in students from other cultures, saying that we want our kids to learn to interact with them, and in some respects homeschooling too is a different culture.

I know that you recently gave a diploma, and had a graduation ceremony, for a high-school aged homeschooler in your district. That's intriguing, because I can imagine some superintendents saying, "Why should I give a diploma to a student who has never attended the school?"

Well, in this state, it's the principal who awards the diploma. But my attitude is that if we have been part of it at all, if we have guided and certified that a really fine educational experience has happened, we should have the same celebration that we have for our own students. In general my feeling is, these are children, and you don't close doors for children. I think we should be opening doors.

Teen Groups

Critics say homeschoolers don't have access to group activities. As these stories show, homeschoolers are creating groups to meet their social and academic needs, and learning a lot in the process. We hope these stories will inspire others.

From teen homeschooler Leigh Pennebaker (MS):

Getting Started

Last August a few members of our local homeschoolers' group, Homeschoolers of Central Mississippi, wanted to start a teen group for social and educational enrichment. Some people wanted it to be mostly educational enrichment, and wanted do structured stuff like have a science class and do math with a tutor, and other people wanted to do more social things. We had a meeting with the parents and the teens - there were about 10-15 teens at the first meeting - and the more structured side kind of won out. Most of the older teens were coming from really structured homeschooling backgrounds, in which they used curriculums, and the parents were feeling that at this point there were things, like algebra, that they were uncomfortable teaching themselves. They wanted the group to be a 3 Rs kind of group, and I guess they won out because they had a more distinct view of what they wanted to do than we did. The teens just felt, "We want to get together and do something," and the parents said, "We want to do math and science!" At the beginning, the idea of having the teens in charge never even dawned on anybody.

In October, we started getting together. We decided that we would get together once a week for six weeks, from 11 until 3. In the morning we had devotions, and then we had a government class taught by a parent. In the afternoon we had a math tutor come. It turned out that the parents' original idea of having a math tutor work with all of us at once didn't make sense, because the teens were coming from such a diverse range of math ability. So we decided that everybody would bring the math book that they sometimes, or usually, used at home, and we would have a math tutor sitting by to assist if anybody had a problem. That wasn't very practical, because a lot of people didn't have problems, and they could have just been working at home.

After that we had science, which was taught by a science student at a local college, and that wasn't terrific either. We didn't have assignments or structure at all, which I would normally say was good, but this guy would basically just go up to the board, draw a little picture, and say, "This is the circulatory system," and we were supposed to believe him.

From the first day I was feeling kind of jarred - this was not what I had expected. I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted, but I was more interested in something that was directed by the teens. When I got there, and it was totally directed by the parents, with everybody sitting around two long tables and the parents saying what to do, I realized that this wasn't what I'd wanted. There were a few people that I knew, but I hadn't met most of the teens before, because they were new to the homeschooling group. They were just out of junior high or high school, and most of them popped right out of school and into "school at home," which in a lot of ways could be even worse. So there were a lot of kids who were really disruptive and disrespectful. Some were really wild, actually running around the room, and others wouldn't say a thing except to people they knew. That was kind of a jolt to me, too.

I talked it over with my parents and decided that I would stay in the group for a while and see how it went, and that possibly a lot of the people who didn't really want to be there would stop coming, and the others who were really interested and really wanted to get something good going would remain. That's basically what ended up happening.

From Parent Run to Teen Run

After that first six-week session, a lot of people had problems with how the group had gone. Some of the parents felt that it was unnecessary to have devotions, which made it more like Sunday School than like a teen group. Also, the government class had been very biased. I would have been very interested in a class that told about how the government is run, and all the procedures, but this parent talked about the ethics of government from her point of view. This was before the presidential election, and she passed out leaflets for one candidate and told us that we had to tell our parents to vote for this person. A lot of parents were outraged when their kids came home and told them about that - even if they agreed with her beliefs! So the parents had a meeting and decided, based on what their teens had voiced to them, that the group needed to be more teen run. I wasn't there - strangely enough, at a meeting where they would decide something like that, they didn't invite the teens! But it ended up that they set up a meeting for the teens to get together and hash things out, and one parent sent out a questionnaire, asking the teens, for the first time, what they wanted to do.

I wrote a ten-page answer to the questionnaire, and a good friend of mine wrote the same amount, and when we got to the meeting, we saw that everyone else had just filled in the blanks! I gave a lot of ideas, and explained some of my philosophy and what I hadn't liked about the first few weeks. A couple of my friends and I had researched parliamentary procedure, so we introduced that and asked the others if they wanted to use that in our meetings - did we want to keep minutes and vote and so on. Everybody thought that was a really good idea, so we elected officers and then came up with a rough draft of bylaws, just kind of an outline of what we thought was acceptable behavior in the group and what would be done if we thought someone had violated that. The whole idea of disruptive behavior was a big problem, because several people felt that that had been a big part of what was wrong during the first few weeks, and we had to do something about it, and others felt, how can you define disruptive behavior? That's been a big controversy all along.

It was interesting for me, and I learned a lot, because I had never seen exactly what it was like to grow up in school to that extent, and to be so affected by it. And then even after these kids came home, it wasn't very different from school, because I talked to several of the parents, and they would, I guess, be impressed by how motivated I was to do things, and they'd ask, "What curriculum do you use?" I would say, "We don't use a curriculum, I've never used one." I think some of them learned from that, but some didn't, because we just recently had a meeting, and I was saying that I would be interested in having some kind of English group in which we maybe worked on some kind of newsletter, and several parents said, "You can't do that, you won't learn anything, it has to be out of a curriculum."

I think some of the more school-oriented homeschoolers grew in some respects,because it was impossible *not* to learn from all the things we ended up doing once the group became teen-run. But it seemed that it never even crossed their minds that they could be in one of the leadership positions in the group. They always followed and didn't have much input. There were some kids who had gone to a private school but all their siblings had been homeschooled, so they were familiar with homeschooling. Others had gone to school but had not done too well or had been social outcasts, and then their parents found out about homeschooling but decided to do it in a very school-oriented way. A couple of the kids didn't like the idea of doing anything that seemed educational. If we came up with an activity and said, "We'll learn so much from doing this," they'd say, "Oh, no, it's going to be just like school." It was frustrating for me and my friends sometimes because it was so hard to get our ideas across, but I learned a lot about getting along with people and about initiating things and following through on my ideas. It's been a good

experience in that respect, even though it's been hard at times.

Book Club

After we had the meeting where we elected the officers, we called a couple of extra meetings with just the teens, and we read the ideas that people had written on the questionnaire, and threw out new ideas, and then voted on them. For the first six weeks after that, we kind of went to the other extreme and wanted to make sure no adults came within view, so we were really self-directed. We had a book club, where everyone agreed to read the same book. The first book we chose was *The Glass Menagerie*, which we chose because a local theater was performing that play. After we had read it a few of us went to see it, and that was really interesting. After that we kind of assigned ourselves *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but not many people read it. I don't think the book club was a good idea for a group that was just thrown together with that not being the central focus. I think if we wanted to have a book club, we would need to have that as a separate group for people who were interested in that specifically.

We also did show and tell, where each person brought in something that they were interested in and explained how they got involved in it. Then, my dad is an artist, so he taught a beginning drawing class.

Studying the Civil War

For the next six-week session, the spring session, we focused on the Civil War, and that was so much fun and so educational and so different from that first session, when the parents were directing it, that it amazes me that any of them can still think that we need to be doing something that they direct. Everybody wanted to study the Civil War because each semester Homeschoolers of Central Mississippi has a theme set up, and they'll have book clubs and other activities for young children related to that theme, and this spring the theme was the Civil War, so we wanted to have our activities relate to that, too.

We began by having a Civil War re-enactor come, dressed as a union soldier and carrying all the paraphernalia that one would have carried as a foot soldier during the Civil War. He stayed for an hour, and that was really interesting. On the same day, an author of a book on the Civil War and southern life came and read parts of the book and talked to us. At that time, I was vice-president of the group, and the president and I had found these people by calling around to historic places and getting in touch with people who knew a lot about history.

The next week I wasn't there, I had to go somewhere else, but the others went to a Civil War era house and museum, and the people gave them a tour and explained what life was like on the home front. That was one of our big interests - we didn't want to find out just about the major battles and the famous people, because you can read that in most books. We wanted to learn what it would have been like to be a regular person, or a regular soldier, during that time. On that same day, the group also talked to a historian about the politics of the Civil War, and they said that the event was just wonderful and enthralling and that the historian just loved our group. That was one of the amazing things - as frustrated as I would sometimes get with the kids who were new to homeschooling, whenever we had someone speak to us, the instructor or lecturer would be shocked at our maturity and interest.

Another activity was going to a Civil-War-era plantation and mansion - which is not, of course, a plantation any more. I had the idea to dress up in authentic costumes, and I thought I would be laughed at because the kids would think the idea was ridiculous. But everyone jumped on it and thought it was a neat idea, and everybody worked hard on their costumes and had a great time.

Next year we're going to study the three branches of government, and also study different careers. We'll go to a restaurant and see how a chef works, go to a law firm and see how a lawyer works.

In GWS #85, we interviewed Emily Linn (MI) about how she formed an older homeschoolers group in her area. Because Emily was out of the country when we were working on this issue of GWS, we asked her mother, Diane, to tell us about what the group has gotten involved in since it formed.

Focused Academic Activities

At first, the group had mainly been going on field trips and getting together for social activities. Then last spring, Emily was feeling the need to study a foreign language, so she hired a Waldorf French teacher to do a five-session program with some kids from the group. She wanted the Waldorf approach, where there's lots of artistic and hands-on activities, and she thought it would be fun to study with other homeschoolers. Getting together with others would also be a way of sharing the cost of the teacher. About five kids participated, but some were less interested than others. It was a satisfying experience for Emily - they sang songs, drew maps, learned some vocabulary, memorized some poetry. Emily really enjoyed it, but she could see that foreign language was not the strongest interest of the homeschoolers in the group. Yet she could also see that although that subject was not where the best possibilities lay, there was interest in getting together for focused academic activities. Emily has felt, and I think she has felt this on the part of the other kids too, a need to find the other independent spirits who are out there, the ones who have stood still in the face of everyone going to school and said, "I'm not going, I'm independent, I've made other choices."

A lot of friendships have grown among the kids in the group. The kids are meeting people from many different backgrounds, with many different kinds of life experiences, and the friendships really cross those lines.

She sent out a survey to the group, listing some topics that she thought were interesting, and asking for feedback. Every September the group gets together for a business meeting, and at that meeting last fall they brainstormed a list of things that they wanted to study but didn't feel they could easily study on their own and would enjoy studying with a group. Many people mentioned foreign language, but they wanted different languages, so that wouldn't work well. The two other topics that emerged were science and the arts. So that led us to organize a 15-session biology program, and then we had a ceramics program at a century-old historic pottery in this area. Emily led two crafts programs, and I led one on introduction to drawing.

Friendships Within the Group

There are about 40 kids in the group all together, and they come from within about an hour's drive of Detroit. Of course, not everyone participates in every activity. Some activities have to be limited in size, and not everyone is interested in every activity anyway. Sometimes we only get three or four people, and that can be fun, too. A lot of friendships have grown among kids in the group. Emily now feels that she has a good group of pals. She has made it a point, in all the flyers she sends out, to say that this is a nonsectarian group, that we don't favor any one philosophy, in order to welcome all homeschoolers. Consequently, the group is really a mixture of people - we have people

homeschooling for religious reasons, people homeschooling for academic or other philosophical reasons. The group has become racially integrated, too, which we're very grateful for. The kids are meeting people from many different backgrounds, with many different kinds of life experiences, and the friendships really cross those lines.

Biology Program

The biology program was one of the best activities. It really worked splendidly. We started with five kids, and by the end we had 12 because the word spread. Emily had asked her father if he would be the primary leader of the group, and then I was sort of the academic coordinator. The three of us spent many hours talking about the structure of the program, who would assume what responsibilities. We continually checked with Emily and asked her how she thought things were going.

People couldn't do enough for us; we had so much time donated. They're so impressed by a group of teenagers who are truly interested in learning.

Early on, we decided to run it as a co-op. We asked each family to have at least one adult participating in some way. Several families were in charge of getting materials - we gave them catalogs, and a lot of materials just came from the hardware store or the grocery store. One mother was in charge of getting research articles from the library for the kids to look at. When we came to evolution, my husband Tom presented evolution from the point of view of the textbook, and then another father offered a presentation from the Creationist point of view. He gave a wonderful talk, and it was a marvelous contrast - it laid out two different viewpoints for the kids to compare. Later in the year this man brought in his computer and gave a talk on fractal geometry, and it was absolutely riveting.

Every other week, Tom would present the material from the textbook and answer questions about it, and then maybe have some sort of lab work. On the alternate weeks, we did mostly lab work. That became more and more flexible as we went along, but we did make sure that Tom had the opportunity to sit down with the kids and talk about their readings. We had a textbook that we used to cover all the basics in an efficient way, but because textbooks are so boring and so often overloaded with superfluous details, we supplemented it with other books, many of which were more elementary than the textbook. We told the kids not to sit down and memorize terms, but just to read for understanding, and if the terms were important enough and if they used them enough, they would eventually find that they had memorized them.

By the spring, we were getting into physiology and anatomy. A friend of ours who is a biologist told us that he had to order specimens in bulk, and that we could have the ones that he didn't need, for free. This might be useful for other homeschoolers to know: biologists or biology teachers have to order this stuff in bulk, and so often they end up throwing things away, so if a homeschoolers group contacted their local high school, they might get just what they were looking for. It's also easy to order specimens through biological supply houses. We discovered a wonderful resource called Aves Science Kit Company (PO Box 229,West Peru ME 04290) which sells complete kits, geared to a certain topic in high school biology, for about $5.

Two of the parents were in charge of field trips and speakers. When we studied bacteria, for example, we went to the Detroit sewage treatment plant and learned how bacteria are used as a natural purifier of sewage. We had a prominent geneticist come and speak to us, too, and give a slide show. The mother who organized this called a hospital and asked about how to arrange for a geneticist to speak. We've found that if you say, "We're a group of homeschoolers and the kids are highly motivated and very interested in this topic," it's as if "motivated" and "interested" are magic words. People couldn't do enough for us; we had so much time donated. They're so impressed by a group of teenagers who are truly interested in learning.

We didn't run the program like a traditional classroom. We had made it clear at the beginning that we were not a school and were not in charge of how much the kids learned. It was very informal, and there were no tests, except at the end we had a final exam which we held by pretending we were on a TV game show. Everyone was slamming on bells and screaming out answers, and the whole group aced the complete exam that was in the textbook.

Art History, Great Books, Holocaust Studies

Other activities we did this year were: we went and talked with an admissions officer at the University of Michigan, and we had a docent tour of the main library to hear about research skills. We have some wonderful activities planned for next year. I administer a program in an arts school in Detroit, so I arranged for an art historian and a printmaker to come next year. Emily asked Tom if he would do a physics program, because that's really his first love, even though he enjoyed doing the biology too. We decided that we don't need to meet as often for physics as we had met for biology, because we'd like to have time for other things, and the kids were so highly motivated that they really didn't need the kind of spoon-feeding that even once a week gave. They did a lot of reading and exploring on their own.

Emily had done a program at the Detroit Main Library called Great Books, and she was quite disappointed in it because the kids were very uninterested - some of them were made to go there by their high schools for credit - and they only read excerpts of the books. So Emily wanted to do Great Books with the homeschoolers group, and she asked me if I would lead the discussion.

Another event Emily organized grew out of her interest in stories of courage in connection with the Holocaust. She had already read many books on the subject, and then she read in the paper about a woman named Agi Rubin who is a survivor of Auschwitz and now lives in this area. The article said that she has devoted her life to talking to school groups about her experiences. Emily was so interested in this that she said, "I wish I could find this woman." The article said that she lived in our area, but didn't give an address. Emily called a Jewish temple, and they knew about her and said they couldn't give out her phone number, but they'd take Emily's. Within minutes, Agi returned the call and said that she'd be very pleased to speak to our group. She wouldn't take any money, but she asked that we make a donation to the Holocaust Memorial Center in the Detroit area. Agi offered to give us a tour of this museum and then speak to us and answer questions. After this conversation, I remembered that we had recently met a Dutch woman who had been involved in the Dutch resistance when she was 12. I suggested that Emily call her, and she too was very willing to speak to our group. So now we have this two-session program with two very courageous women.

The whole experience of organizing this group has made Emily feel that in her adult life she would like to be self-employed. There are so many business aspects to the group - hiring people to teach subjects or lead activities, making contracts, keeping a budget - and she has enjoyed those aspects so much. It's also been very empowering for her to see that when she wanted to meet more homeschoolers, she could do something to make that happen.

Challenges & Concerns

Homeschoolers Getting Along

Ellen Foster (GA) writes in response to Victoria Moran's letter, "Getting Along When Philosophies Differ," GWS #92:

I really feel for you in the problems you express as an unschooler trying to develop relationships with fundamentalist Christians who do "school at home." I have seen problems with homeschooling splits along religious lines in other parts of the country as well.

It saddens me to see this happening. I am a Christian and believe the Bible literally, which is what I assume you mean by the word "fundamentalist." I am also very much an unschooler. As such, I hope my input will be helpful to you, and perhaps to Christians considering homeschooling as well.

I started out doing "school at home" for a short time when our oldest son, Derek, was 5. It didn't take long to see that it was not the wonderful experience I had thought it would be. Derek hated being forced and I hated forcing him. Fortunately, at that time, I was able to seek the help of my friend, Manfred Smith, the director of the Maryland Home Education Association. Manfred shared his own family's learning experiences with me and encouraged me to read John Holt and GWS. I soon got rid of the curriculum. I did encounter conflicts with some of my beliefs in my reading, but I was also fascinated with the insights I found into how children learn. I continue to read John's books and GWS with much appreciation. After all, GWS prints many perspectives, presumably with the intention that readers will find what helps them.

I think many Christians, however, may be suspicious of literature and ideas not explicitly Christian, because we feel kind of beaten up by society. In this era of civil rights, for some reason it seems like open season on Christians. We are slammed without apology by the media in the news, in magazine articles, in books, and in movies. People tend to judge us openly and characterize us by a few public figures who have blown it. In fact, people are very freely bigoted against us without even seeming to realize it or care about it. In response, some Christians have psychologically "drawn their wagons in a circle," choosing to relate almost exclusively with other Christians and to read mostly Christian literature, creating an environment with less hostility and fewer unknowns.

Many Christian parents seem to feel this isolation makes it easier to impart their ideals to their children. Knowingly or not, most or perhaps all parents tend to persuade their kids to their way of thinking, whether overtly or not. Most parents have some ideals that they hope their children will espouse, and for us, it is Jesus Christ as a reality in our lives.

It is unfortunate, however, that sometimes literature advertising itself as "unashamedly Christian" is so isolationist that it comes across as "obnoxiously" Christian. And perhaps it springs from a desire to give children direction, but most Christian literature on homeschoolng these days tends to be from the "force-feeding" school of education (with the notable exception of the recent work of Raymond and Dorothy Moore). I suppose many of us who were brought up under a "school mentality" have a hard time believing that children will learn without constant prodding from an adult, and this literature tends to perpetuate that idea.

In light of this, I am glad that even with the differences in educational style, you have found the Christian parents you relate to kind and their children friendly, because it seems to me that exclusively Christian relationships are antithetical to Christianity. If we are trying to emulate Jesus, we need to realize that He befriended many people who were coming from a completely different perspective than He was.

On the other hand, parents are usually sensitive to whether the friendships their families develop are supportive. Since you and the families you deal with are coming from such different points of reference, there are going to be disagreements, but I do think there are ways to build bridges. The key to this is finding areas on which you do agree and focusing on those. For example, you mentioned your commitment to the environment. I don't think most Christians would fight you on the concept of taking care of the earth; it's making a religion out of it that many object to. If it's a religion to you, it wouldn't make that a focal point. Perhaps you and these parents might agree that the earth is a gift from God, meant to be taken care of, and go from there.

I wouldn't, however, "pretend to espouse the same beliefs they hold." I understand your desperation for meaningful friendships, but I'd never go that far. Again, though, differences do not need to be a focal point. If you build on your areas of commonality, you may develop a secure enough foundation of friendship to tackle friendly debates down the road.

On hiding your Buddha statue and your books on other religions, you'll have to decide. These things will definitely make some parents nervous. I can tell you that we have several good homeschooling friends who are not Christians, and if there is anything I think may really make them uncomfortable when they come to visit, I put it away. And I can tell you that once these friendships have been somewhat established and we have some mutual trust and understanding, we have been able to discuss differences without scaring each other off.

I think your greatest difficulty will be finding ways to deal with other families' structure. Our children have some schooled friends and some from more structured homeschooling families. But their best friends tend to be unschooled children, I think for the reasons you mention, the "long, unrushed days together of exploring and imagining." In fact, I think this is the reason our four boys (3, 5, 7, and 9) are so close with each other. My sister, who is also pretty much an unschooler, lives nearby, and our children learn the most wonderful things together that she and I have little to do with other than supplying some raw materials, e.g. maps books, games, computers, art materials, etc. I think in many ways their freedom defines their relationship. With other children, we have no choice but to relate to them on their timetable. But we also find that as we spend more time together, we do find ways to connect.

Overcoming Doubts

Laura Brion (CT) writes:

A few months ago, I was feeling a little nervous about how well my home education was going. Was I keeping up with the kids in school? Was I learning enough? I hardly ever use textbooks, and as they are a straightforward way of learning academic subjects, I felt I should start using them more. My mother bought some Key Curriculum Math workbooks for me, and I enjoyed using them. Even so, I still did not feel quite satisfied. I did not know it, but what I really needed was a full understanding of natural learning.

Recently, the state home education association held a conference, and one of the adult workshops was titled, "Unschooling - what is it?" There would be several people on a panel to talk about their experiences with homeschooling and to answer questions. My mother was taking pre-registrations for the conference, so she was notified soon after it turned out that somebody who was to be on the panel was now not able to be at the conference. My mother and I offered to fill the empty space. It seemed like it would be fun, but when I started thinking about it, I became rather uneasy about being on the panel. I had no idea whatsoever of what I would say, and at the time I felt I was barely doing anything educational.

On the long, bumpy car ride over to the conference, my mother and I began discussing possible questions people would ask, such as, "How do you learn math?" and "Do you miss school?" I

thought of answers, and as we drove, I began to realize that we weren't doing nothing, and in fact, we were actually doing a lot. My confidence level grew higher and higher along with the little gizmo that tells you how many miles you have driven.

When we finally arrived, our workshop was about to begin. We rushed in, as fast as you can with a dog crate and a toddler. My mother and I jumped into our chairs, just in the nick of time. "Good," I thought. "I'm the last to speak. Maybe there won't be enough time for me to say anything." Nervousness overpowered my confidence and I wanted to curl up in a cocoon like a caterpillar. I could feel everyone's eyes burning hot holes in my face.

Finally it was my mother's turn. She stood up, introduced herself, and gave a speech as if she had been rehearsing it for months. I was very proud, but I thought the contrast would make me look like an idiot and her look like a star. I do not mind my mother looking good, but I don't like looking like a jerk.

Then it was my turn. I stood up and said, "My name is Laura Brion. I'm 11 years old. I'll be 12 in June, and ... I don't really know what to say! I - I agree with everything my mother has said, and I'll answer questions if you have any." There. I had said it all. I sat down, relieved. But a few hands popped up and I stood up again, nervous and unsure of what to do.

Suddenly I realized that they were coming to *me* for help. I was teaching them! I began answering questions, remembering and glad of the discussion in the car. Some questions I had planned for, and others I hadn't. "What project are you working on now?" is one that my grandmother always asks me and I have to squiggle out of it like a worm. But here I was not free in the soil; I was caught on a hook. So I told the man who had asked the question about things I do all the time, such as working at a farm. I gave a good answer, and it was not a school like one.

I feel much more confident about my education now than I did before I was on the unschooling panel. Answering the questions helped me realize that just by following my interests and living, I learn as much as and more than I would in school.

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Volunteer Requirements, Testing Requirements

[SS:] Susan Kurtz of North Dakota asked two questions that seem to be fairly common, so this exchange may be of general interest:

I am writing to ask what other homeschooling families do regarding their children doing volunteer work. My son is 11 years old and wanting to do some volunteer work at the local public library a few hours each week. He was told that he must be 14, due to state laws and something to do with the possibility of being injured while working there.

Any suggestions? I read of other children under 14 doing volunteer work at various places. How do other parents deal with this, or is this something peculiar to the state of North Dakota?

Another question: we are required by state law to be supervised by a certified teacher who comes to our home once a week. My children must also be tested each spring. I am not happy with either of these requirements, but at least my children are out of school. ... We have the public school's curriculum guides, but they are written in such complicated, nonsensical educational jargon that I haven't been able to force myself to wade through them. I would love to let my children be largely unstructured in their schooling, but with that testing looming over me, I don't feel that I can. When they take the test, they will feel badly if they don't do at least fairly well. I welcome any comments you may have.

[SS:] I replied:

About young kids doing volunteer work: it's true that some workplaces do have that restriction. One thing you can do is offer to sign something absolving the library of any responsibility, should anything happen to Adam while he's working there. Some people will give the name of their home school (you make something up) and say that the child is officially under the auspices of the home school, which is leasing him out to do volunteer work as part of the homeschooling program.

It's also helpful to let workplaces know that you're willing to try this as an experiment, that you're not locking them in to a long-term commitment. Perhaps another workplace will be receptive to this, even if your library remains inflexible. Maybe the interviews with adults who have let kids volunteer with them, in GWS #79, will be helpful to you, either because they might inspire your library to relax its regulations or because you'll get ideas of other things Adam can do. Good luck, and let me know what you manage to work out.

About the testing requirements: I know this is burdensome (although it's better than the previous law in North Dakota, as you know), but one thing you do have some control over is how you view the requirements, what your attitude is. That is, it's possible for you to see them as requirements you have to put up with in order to home school but *not* as actual measurements of the success of your homeschooling. You don't have to follow the supervisory teacher's suggestions and you don't have to let the prospect of the test control how you homeschool. I can't remember what the new North Dakota law says about how well a child has to score on the tests, but it's seldom very high, so it's not usually something you have to worry much about.

I know you've said that your kids will feel bad if they don't score well. I think this is something you can talk about and work with a bit, though. We print lots of stuff in GWS about how flawed standardized tests are and how they don't really measure one's learning, and if you wanted to, you could certainly share some of this with your kids (either by reading it to them directly, or by summarizing it in ways they could understand), and let them know that you don't place a lot of stock in standardized tests, but for now it's something you'll all have to put up with in order to homeschool. You can even talk to them about not wanting to let the tests direct your homeschooling. You can say something like, "We could spend a lot of our time during the year preparing for these tests, but if we did that, we wouldn't have time to do other things we want to do. I'd like you to be able to use the freedom of homeschooling to do the things that you are interested in, but that may mean that you're going to spend less time on the stuff that the tests care about, and that *may* mean that you won't score as well." Note here that I'm being so tentative about this last part because lots of kids score well on these tests even when they don't spend much or any time preparing for them. I would then go on to ask your kids to think about this and think about what they themselves could live with, feel happy with, in regard to all this. Are they willing to take the chance and not prepare for the test at all? Or would they prefer to spend some time preparing for it and some time doing other stuff?

Susan wrote again:

Your advice regarding persuading our public library to let Adam volunteer there was helpful. We told the library we would sign something absolving them of responsibility in case of an accident, and that doing volunteer work was part of our "homeschooling curriculum." That satisfied them (we haven't needed to sign anything), and Adam now works there for two hours, one afternoon a week.

In fact, we don't have or use a curriculum, but if that is what I needed to tell them, then I don't mind bending the facts. Adam is enjoying the work and is glad to save the library money which can then be spent on new books, which he can enjoy.

You also wrote to me last winter regarding our children having to take

standardized tests every spring. I talked with all three of my children (ages 11, 8, and 6) and told them that the tests aren't a very good measure of how much knowledge they have acquired. Also, I told them that it was up to them whether they wanted to spend time preparing for the tests. They all said no, they didn't, and we went about our business.

So, spring rolled around, they all took the tests, and all three scored in the 90th percentile, except for a score of 55% in math for my 6 year old. The state only requires that they score above 30% to allow us to continue our homeschooling. We don't even tell the children the results, since we don't place importance on them, and they don't seem interested. We do save the results, to document the success of our homeschooling in a way that will satisfy the education authorities, should anyone decide to challenge us.

Prefers Fewer Activities

Jeanne Ferrari-Amas (HI) writes:

I would like to respond to Julie Scandora's letter in GWS #92 "Treating Them With Respect"), to say that I too believe that most children are overinvolved in outside activities and if given a choice would choose very few, if any. Our children were involved in dance, Scouts, karate, art school, and tennis at various times. Slowly we cut out one activity at a time, until now we are involved only in a very casual church choir. The children were never so enthusiastic about any of the activities and always preferred our un-scheduled nights at home or at the library. I realized how these outside activities were taking away from family time, and that our family time was superior to the activities. We needed time to stay up late, play Monopoly, cook together.

I also think that most adults are too involved in outside activites. Sometimes I think these activities are an excuse for not being with their families. I'm one who's gone from working overtime at night, and having nightly activities, to one who guards my time. I've found that I've learned so much just being at home, and getting to know my neighbors, now that I have time.

Thanks from Lourdes Rivas

Lourdes Rivas ("Low Income Family Needs Ideas," GWS #92) writes:

I am writing to thank you for publishing my letter in GWS. Since my letter was published, I had so many responses - letters full of encouragement, ideas, and love. We have received packages with children's books, arts and crafts supplies, writing tablets, pencils, and old issues of GWS and other homeschool magazines that I have devoured from cover to cover.

My children are so happy. They did not know why all of these packages were coming in the mail. Then I explained to them about my letter that I wrote to GWS. My oldest son said, "Mama, these people really know how to share. They are so kind!" And my youngest said, jumping up and down, "Thank you God for all of these things! This is fun!"

When my husband got home from work and the children showed him what was in the first two packages that we received, he just stood there with his mouth open, and then said, "Where did you get all these things?" Of course the children, with their enthusiasm, explained to him what happened.

The first things that we received were children's books, and I spent most of that day reading to the children. They didn't want me to stop. Seeing my children's faces so happy and enthusiastic makes me the happiest mother in the world.

What I treasure most about all the responses is the letters people wrote to me about their homeschooling experiences. The letters were full of encouragement, ideas, resources, creativity, prayers, and most of all, love. First I thank God, then GWS for publishing my letter, and then of course all the readers who responded, and the anonymous person who wrote that they gave me a subscription to GWS. That subscription is going to be my continual encouragement and support. Sorry I could not write to each and every one of you - there were so many letters.

One thing that I realized was that I have a lot to learn. But the best part is that I am going to learn together with my children. I am going to take a break for the summer, enjoy it with my children and my husband, and then plan ahead for next year.

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Watching Children Learn

Be Careful Not to Discourage

Ruth Matilsky (NJ) writes:

What I think is even more insidious than school's labels is the way I hear people describe their children: "She is not athletic/musical/scientific..." - just fill in the blank. Often these labels are applied to children under 5. There is this idea, that I once shared, that musical genius or aptitude in any area will show itself very early.

I have learned a lot from watching my own children. When Sarabeth was 5, she could not sing. Because singing has always been so easy for me, I could not imagine that she would ever be able to carry a tune. But Terry and I told her she sounded fine, gave her lots of positive reinforcement, and by the time she was 9 and wanted to audition for a community theater production, she had a somewhat passable voice. She got into the production (and in fact got the biggest child's part) mostly because of her acting ability. This, however, gave her even more confidence, and she got some experience singing with others. As time has gone on her voice has gotten stronger and the pitch has improved. She has been in two musicals since then and this year learned to do harmony. It didn't come easily to her. She worked very hard and was successful. I'd always thought that either one had it or didn't have it, but I see, through Sara's example, that that is wrong.

It gives me the chills to think how easy it would have been to discourage Sara from singing. With the best of intentions we might have tactfully dissuaded her from music, thinking that she obviously had no talent. I see the same thing with sports. Not all children have the physical strength or the hand-eye coordination early on to catch a ball or do gymnastics. But I have seen that as long as the child does not get negative feedback about his or her abilities, she or he may become skillful in this area at a later age.

Veteran Homeschooler Looks Back

Ruth Freedman of Kentucky writes:

I elected to homeschool beginning in 1978, very much as John Holt and others recommended, because I knew that children loved learning *before* school and I saw no reason why it should not continue. Deborah, Rebekah, and Abigail are now 24, 22, and 19 and have become, by God's grace, living proof that it *does* continue. In the area of academics alone, I gave them total freedom. We had no classes, tests, grades, lesson plans, book reports, required writing or reading, spelling lessons, textbooks, expensive curricula, TV with video lessons, or computers. What we did have was: lots of time for questions and conversations; reading, beginning with fiction and branching out into many interesting areas; trips to the library, yard sales, secondhand bookstores; learning domestic duties, including yard care and figuring out how to repair simple things on lawn mowers, vacuum cleaners, fans, lamps, etc., with some help from my brother; playing instruments (piano, viola, flute, clarinet, recorder); sewing, needlework, gardening, canning, freezing, cooking/baking. The girls' interests have varied greatly.

Deborah has always liked maps and certain aspects of geography, but when she took up studies at the University of Louisville, she found that chemistry was more fascinating to her, and she has now declared it her major. She is more inclined to the sciences than the others are, though we never had science classes, did science projects, or attended science fairs. She has made A's in college science classes. In her first semester, she took an honors English composition class (her GED and SAT scores enabled her to skip freshman English), and though she'd never written a paper in her life, she got A's on all of the ones she wrote for that class and was much appreciated by her professor. Both she and Abigail have determined to get to know and be known by their instructors, questioning them outside of classes about various things. These poor "socially deprived" young people have also gotten on well with the other students, though we were never into homeschool support groups and they had no regular contact with their peers.

Rebekah has decided that college isn't for her. She has continued with her drawing, writing, and reading. History is probably her favorite academic pursuit. She did take the GED last year when Abi took hers, and she did so well that a man from the Kentucky Department of Adult Education called and wanted to honor her with some sort of reward (a plaque I believe). She declined, but did tell him, at my request, that she'd been homeschooled. (One does what one can to help the cause.)

Abigail, though also an avid reader, has always loved domestic pursuits, and for a long while she harbored notions (seemingly promoted by her dad and stepmother) that she, having never been to *real* school at all, must have inferior intellectual equipment. Her sisters conquered Saxon Math (the only new textbooks we ever bought, and we got the teachers' editions so they could check their own work), but she just knew she couldn't do it. Still, she's a perfectionist, a glutton for punishment, and she wanted to take the GED, so she relentlessly launched herself into the depths of Saxon Algebra I. Less than a year later, she emerged out the other side of Algebra II! Needless to say, we appreciate and recommend the John Saxon math books. After the GED, on which she did well, she took the SAT and was thrilled with her scores. The University of Louisville received her into the honors program where, in her first semester, she took French and political science. Like her sister, she likes history and added to that is a fascination for the machinations of governments. She got to know her professor, the head of that department, and they rather developed a mutual admiration society. Abigail was thrilled when Dr. M. told her she was thinking of putting her name up for the Oxford Scholarship in a year or two, if Abi continues with political science. This would mean five weeks in England. It will be an educational and exciting experience, if it happens.

The girls learned basic math skills through everyday use of numbers: handling their own money from 3 or 4 years old on, cooking with recipes, measuring things, etc. They learned to write by reading and by letter-writing to family and friends, which they had me proofread and help them correct.

Deborah learned to use a computer when the dentist for whom she works (now only part time) installed one. Rebekah has learned, through Deborah's access to the one at the office and through the local library's computer system, to be unafraid of computers. She says that when and if she gets something published, she hopes to purchase a word processor to facilitate her writing. Abigail doesn't much want to deal with the things, but knows it would help, especially with writing papers at school. She plans to take a course on computer usage.

Rebekah does work for older folks in our neighborhood, especially yard work. Abi works about 20 hours a week as a supermarket cashier. All have been helping with family finances for years, as the support we received from their dad dwindled and finally ended completely. I have never had to work outside our home, though I did part-time work with a babysitting agency for one year. We have learned to make the proverbial ends meet by cutting a lot out of the middle! I know I have been blessed beyond what I ever hoped or thought through the homeschooling of my daughters. They tell people they have been, too. What more reward could I ask?

(Watching Children Learn continues on p. 27)

JOHN HOLT'S BOOK AND MUSIC STORE

Real Lives: Eleven Teenagers Who Don't Go to School edited by Grace Llewellyn
#1772 $14.95 + post.

The homeschooling community is lucky that Grace Llewellyn decided to quit schoolteaching and become an advocate of unschooling and of teenagers' rights. I don't know how I managed before I had *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* to recommend to kids who are thinking of homeschooling or kids who have been homeschooling for years but are feeling the need to make some changes.

Now Grace has given us *Real Lives*, an edited collection of writing by homeschooled teenagers. As someone who believes in letting kids themselves answer questions and criticisms about homeschooling, and furthermore as someone who is always arguing that kids can indeed write serious nonfiction if given the chance, I am unashamedly wild about this book; I think it's one of the most exciting things to happen to (or to come out of) the homeschooling movement in a long time.

The eleven teenagers (ranging in age from 12 to 16) who write for *Real Lives* tell about what they do, and they also tell about what they think. Erin Roberts writes about her work at a horse farm and her intense involvement with soccer, and she speaks eloquently to the question of whether physical and mental activities must be thought of as separate. Anne Brosnan writes about discovering her love for bluegrass music and discusses how she figured out the best way to make use of teachers. Amanda Bergson-Shilcock writes about giving "booktalks" to children at a local school and makes some observations about how being in school affects kids. Tabitha Mountjoy volunteers at a crisis hotline, Vallie Raymond at a marine science center, Kevin Sellstrom at a school for mentally handicapped children, Rebecca Merrion at homeless shelters, Ayanna Williams for an oral history project, Jeremiah and Serena Gingold by putting out a peace newsletter. These kids are learning from the world and they're contributing to it, too. It's impossible to read this book and not understand that homeschooling is more than just sitting at home with a textbook.

The book contains a good balance of essays by kids who have never been to school and kids who have only recently left it. I think the essays by Ayanna Williams, Patrick Meehan, and Kyla Wetherell, all of whom began homeschooling when they were teenagers, may be the most helpful to readers who are considering homeschooling, because they show that it really is never too late to become self-directed, to unlearn the negative messages of school, to discover one's passions. Ayanna dedicates her essay "to all the kids I used to go to school with, especially the ones who couldn't - or didn't - make it in the school system," and one senses that Ayanna wishes these other kids could have the freedom she now enjoys. Patrick Meehan's chronicle of suffering in the school system reads like a gripping novel, and he vividly describes how homeschooling became a solution when school simply did not work. Kyla is the successful student and editor of the school newspaper who left school a week after reading *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, and her chapter in *Real Lives* tells us what she did afterwards: wrote, read, played the guitar, worked at local newspapers, and learned bike maintenance so that she could plan a solo bicycle trip through South America. Part 2 of Kyla's essay is about this trip, which she did indeed take. (It's dangerous to let kids know that they can leave school!)

A wonderful bonus is the book's appendix, in which several of the writers and their parents address the question, "Do you have to be a genius to unschool?" "Don't be ridiculous!" answers Serena, and the others in one way or another explain that *they* are not above average, but the amount of freedom and control they have *is*. Amanda writes, "Don't fall for the labels. Everyone is talented." Erin says, "You don't have to be a genius to unschool, but unschooling will help you bring out your own particular genius." No doubt because they've had to defend this charge for most of their lives, these kids seem instinctively to understand that dismissing them as geniuses is a way of ignoring what has really made their lives so special: freedom, that dangerous concept that many adults are reluctant to think of in connection with teenagers but for which these young writers argue so eloquently. — Susannah Sheffer

Alternatives in Education
edited by Mark and Helen Hegener #1774 $16.75 + post.

The Exhausted School
edited by John Taylor Gatto #1672 $10.95 + post.

In 1981, when I started working here at Holt Associates, homeschooling was often perceived as a very reclusive, fanatical sort of movement; I know I felt that way when I was first learning about it. But homeschooling is increasingly now being seen not as an act of radical individualism, but as a sane educational choice. *Alternatives in Education* and *The Exhausted School* show homeschooling as one effective way, among many, to educate children, thus getting the good word out about homeschooling in the context of educational alternatives, rather than in the more common contexts of religious freedom or parental rights. Certainly religious freedom and parental rights are important to homeschoolers, but the pedagogical and philosophical knowledge that can influence the daily reality of homeschooling is important too. As more parents come into homeschooling, they bring with them unquestioned assumptions about teaching and learning that they picked up in school. One researcher, Dr. J. Gary Knowles of the University

of Michigan, has reported that rather than using innovative teaching and learning techniques, the majority of homeschoolers simply "Teach as they were taught." What can homeschoolers learn from alternative educators, and what can we share with these allies, to move beyond the government schooling that we all agree is not working?

Alternatives In Education provides an excellent overview of many educational philosophies. You can use the book to pick and choose ideas and concepts that match your homeschooling needs or to develop your own philosophy of education. The first few chapters define alternative education and contain useful information and essays about family empowerment and the politics of education. Brief biographical sketches of key figures in alternative education are provided in another chapter. Each chapter ends with references for further information, and many of the entries also contain references. The chapters on "Homeschooling" and "Alternative Schools" are filled with many cogent descriptions of what homeschooling is like for a particular family or how a particular school was created and how it operates today. Dr. Pat Montgomery appears in both sections; the lively interview with her in the homeschooling chapter is well worth reading. Waldorf and Montessori schools are covered in a separate chapter, and finally high school and higher education are covered from the perspective of alternative schooling. *Alternatives In Education* is a great reference book that can acquaint you with several schools of thought. It offers not only practical ideas to use, but also good arguments for allowing your children the freedom to learn in their own way and at their own pace, from homeschoolers and from some of the "big names" in educational theory and practice.

I need to warn you about the biases I have in reviewing these books. I have an article in the Hegeners' book ("Homeschoolers Who Don't Go To College") and I was a participant in Gatto's Exhausted School program. Gatto assembled this event at Carnegie Hall on November 13, 1991 as "a compelling program of public, private, and homeschool alternatives that should be enlightening to every taxpayer — and hair-raising for the school establishment." I presented the case for homeschooling before 2000 people that evening, and other speakers presented the case for other alternatives. This book is a transcript of that event, with an added introduction and afterword by Gatto. Nearly two years later I'm still amazed not only that this event occurred, but that it has even more relevance to the education scene today than it had then. School choice seems dead in today's political climate, but public dissatisfaction with schools is as healthy as ever. I think the complacence of the NEA and other school groups following the defeat of school choice initiatives is misplaced. Even if all the bad physical plants get fixed and we pay teachers more, the basic relationships between teacher and student, and school and community, remain unchanged. Nothing has changed educationally, only materially. If anything, the need to be accountable for the increased money being raised and spent in lean times will force the relationships between pupils and teachers to become more standardized, more regimented, and less human. Education is increasingly being geared towards making children into something the state or business wants, rather than allowing children to make something of themselves.

Unlike *Alternatives In Education*, which is a delightful survey of a variety of educational choices, *The Exhausted School* is an in-depth look at what ten alternative teachers, learners, and schools do, in the words of their advocates, students, and founders. Gatto, as an award-winning inner-city school teacher for twenty-six years, has earned the authority to speak out about the follies of school. He is an unabashed advocate for privatizing schools if only to divert the river of federal and state funding that keeps government school bureaucrats entrenched. While some may disagree with this tactic, it is hard to disagree with the premise that government schools are, at best, an inefficient monopoly. In his closing speech for the evening Gatto notes:

> ...The call you hear all around for a longer school year is only a mask over the endless longing of the school institution for a guaranteed clientele; in times like these, when money isn't forthcoming, then perhaps people can be *frightened* into handing it over. I've just given you a better way to understand why you hear so often about the wonders of Japanese schooling, twelve weeks longer than our own. You are being asked to believe that more is better at the very instant that Hong Kong, with a school year ten weeks *shorter* than Japan's, whips that nation in every single academic category measured. In New York City we hear with reasonable frequency that Israel's long school term confirms the lesson of Japan since both nations trounce U.S. student competition handily. But during this whole gruesome exercise in manipulating our national mind to prepare it for *more* schoolteaching (*in spite* of its hideous track record) I have yet to hear *once* how handily Flemish Belgium trounces Israel in every academic category—even though it has a school year *eleven weeks shorter than Israel's* and *nineteen weeks shorter* than Hong Kong's...
>
> ...The most important thing you need to know about the school hierarchy in New York City — and "official" reform initiatives endorsed by New York teacher-colleges like Columbia's, Bank Street's and Fordham's, and those of invisible 501(c)3 entities like "The Center for Educational Innovation"— is that they maintain a school empire of over 30,000 administrative jobs, visible ones and covert ones. Three-fourths of each school dollar goes for administrative costs. The Catholic Church oversees a million kids in parochial school with about 1/60th the number of administrative jobs New York Schools have—indeed they have more administrators than every nation in western Europe combined.
>
> Why don't you know that? Is it possible someone would rather you didn't?

What makes *The Exhausted School* stand out from all other books about school choice is that it doesn't focus on funding or making schools competitive. Gatto, by his own words and by having invited a wide variety of educators to speak, adds these premises to school choice: 1) Education is not the same as learning. Learning is not a conglomeration of expert techniques, money, and test scores but instead a very human act that works extremely well when people are allowed to interact freely; 2) people don't have to wait for the government to provide them

with school choice. They have choices now, many of them far less expensive than public schooling (average tuition at the Sudbury Valley School is $3000 per year), a few taking place within public schools (David Lehman's Ithaca Alternative Community School and John Gatto's own "guerilla curriculum") and all with successful student outcomes: college admissions and graduation, finding work worth doing, entrepreneurial achievements, etc. How come government schools cannot accommodate such diversity? Why do they hold on to assumptions about children and learning that don't seem to be working while these other models - such as homeschooling - have success that doesn't cost nearly as much in terms of money, time, and effort? Gatto develops his theme throughout the evening, with his characteristic brilliant rhetoric, sweeping summaries of history, and a passion that nearly leaps off the page at you.

Five presentations followed Gatto's introduction: mine on homeschooling, Dan Greenburg's on the Sudbury Valley School, Kathleen Young's on the Hawthorne Valley Farm School, Dave Lehman's on the Ithaca Alternative Community School, and Mary Leue's on the Albany Free School. Each of us presented our different approaches to education not as theoretical models but as working solutions. Each one of our speeches is reproduced in the book in its entirety.

I particularly enjoyed the speeches by four of John Gatto's former students. Two were adults, well on their way to forging important careers. They acknowledged the role John Gatto played in their development by getting them out of the classroom and letting them do something else for school credit, and also the important role their parents played in countering or supplementing their schooling. The other two students, Victor and Jamaal, were still of compulsory school age during the event. Their program notes in the Playbill - reproduced in full as an appendix in *The Exhausted School* - give you a good idea of what professional techniques John Gatto used to earn him the New York State Teacher of the Year award:

Victor: "...I hope some day to be a nationally famous writer and artist... Mr. Gatto gave us a day a week to vanish to local libraries and graphic arts stores to find our own education..."

Jamaal: "I probably got the most out of Mr. Gatto's Guerrilla Curriculum this year because, in addition to getting a day or two each week to work independently on my art with Victor, I won Congressman Rangel's citywide essay contest, first prize in a newspaper essay contest... and published an article in a national magazine... In elementary school I was known as a big troublemaker; now I'm known as the creator of *Elvis Impersonator, Cracked City*, and as the finest short basketball player in America."

What Gatto does, and what we all talked about that night in Carnegie Hall, is to trust children. Gatto ended the evening with these words: "Trust yourselves, trust the people, trust the kids. God bless you all in the struggle ahead." — Pat Farenga

Learning Denied by Denny Taylor #1692 $12.50

At home, Patrick wrote increasingly complex stories and read increasingly difficult books. At school, specialists were busy trying to figure out exactly what kind of "language-based learning disability" Patrick had. The lengthy series of tests they had administered convinced them that Patrick had *some* kind of disability. He was definitely "educationally handicapped."

What's wrong with this picture? Why was Patrick literate and competent at home and perceived as educationally handicapped in school? Why couldn't the school specialists see Patrick's actual abilities? Denny Taylor's account of what happened when Patrick and his family clashed with the school system is riveting, chilling, and important. Paradoxically, this book is so effective as an indictment of the special education bureaucracy because it is so understated. Most of the time,

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Taylor simply tells what happened: what the school officials said in meetings with the family or in written reports; what Patrick did at home in his work with Taylor (whom the family had asked for help). Yet this simple account, without much editorializing, presents a devastating picture. Taylor lets the ironies speak for themselves, for example, in an appendix that lists contradictory statements made about Patrick in various documents:

> Document K-9: "Appeared to take some of his ideas from other students."
> Document K-16: "Does not take cues from other students and teacher in class. Immaturity?"
>
> Document K-23: "Patrick was able to stay on task much more effectively during the administration of these tests."
> Document K-23: "At times, Patrick's attention for the task was at risk and I had to bring him back to task."

Learning Denied joins the other books in our catalog that offer a critical look at the "learning disability" label. Together with *The Learning Mystique* and *In Their Own Way*, it makes essential reading for anyone whose child has been so labeled - and even homeschoolers whose children have never gone to school would be wise to be aware of how this labeling process works, because school officials sometimes try to put these same labels on homeschoolers under their jurisdiction.

I'll let Denny Taylor have the last word here, in the hopes that this passage - one of the few, well-chosen places in which she *does* become impassioned and do more than simply state what happened - will entice you to read the whole book. (Note that Taylor says schools look for neurological explanations of children's failure to learn so that *they*, the schools, won't be blamed. For years, John Holt referred to the LD label as an alibi.)

> Patrick is a bright, articulate child who has been forced to live in the margins of the American educational system. Right from the start his abilities were questioned. There was never a time when the school was willing to acknowledge Patrick's capabilities, or to accept that he could read and write. ... In this book I am asking that we accept societal responsibility for the inappropriate educational decision-making that handicapped Patrick by critically damaging his self-esteem and his perception of himself as a learner. ... I ask this in light of recent research presented in the social science literature that indicates that there are *many* children like Patrick who have been (and continue to be) handicapped by our educational system. Patrick's case is not atypical. Relying on testing to find out what is "wrong" with the child, blaming the child when he or she does not learn in the ways expected in our public institutions, and searching for the glitch in the child's neurological makeup so that the school (system) can be exonerated if and when the child "fails" are all typical of the ways in which we "educate" children.
>
> ... Patrick's school experiences are typical. The school tried to make him fit by prescribing medical management techniques to effect a behavioral change. But what is atypical is the response of Claudia and Pat [the parents] to the efforts of the school. They did not believe that their son was disabled, and they refused to cooperate when it was suggested that Patrick be classified as having a language-based learning disability. The school tried to persuade them and eventually coerce them into accepting this label so that Patrick could receive treatment for the problem...
>
> — SS

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Focus: Making Changes in Homeschooling

For this issue's Focus, we asked several young GWS readers to write about how they have changed their homeschooling over time — to accommodate changing needs or to try something else that might work better.

Giving Up the Curriculum

From Audrey Bennett (IL):

I am 12 years old, and I went to public school from kindergarten through the second grade. When my mom and I decided to homeschool, we used a curriculum, and we tried it for a year and didn't think we liked it. A curriculum keeps telling you what to do and how to think. I felt I could do those things on my own. I found it boring. When we started homeschooling, we did it just like a public school, but quickly it started seeming stupid. Putting things into rigid time slots didn't work.

Both my mom and I were unhappy. She was thinking of sending me back to public school, but then she found out about John Holt. It took a while for my mom to completely give up on her curriculum, but now I can do pretty much what I want regarding everything, and that has worked out very well.

My current study program is simple. When I find a subject of interest, I read about it and research it. I use my encyclopedias a lot, and also spend quite a bit of time at the library using their reference books and checking out things. For example, I have a friend who is a homeschooler, and she is from Maine. I am from Oregon originally. We began comparing the two states, and I wanted to know more about Oregon so I could describe it more intelligently.

Also, I have had an interest in crafts all my life. A while ago I ran into a former neighbor, an adult woman, who does crocheting and makes dolls. She's teaching me these skills. She appreciates my ideas, too, and we have a lot of fun together.

Homeschooling lets me do a lot of different things that I couldn't do if I were in public school, and it is geared to my interests and abilities. I really like it.

Getting Outside the Home

From Amber Weller (RI):

At about the end of last February, I told my mother and father that I was tired of just using textbooks and workbooks for most of my homeschooling and I was bored with staying home all the time. So, we all thought about how we could change my routine and make it more interesting.

I began taking art lessons once a week with one of my grandmothers and Italian lessons from my other grandma. Then my mom started a new job at a jewelry manufacturer's, so I began to go to work with her. I do some bookwork in the morning and help out in the office. I'm in charge of taking the lunch orders. There's also a big pond next to the place where she works, and I do a lot of fishing and using my microscope for observing pond life.

Since I have been going to work with my mom, I also have had the chance to get to know the people she works with. Some of them are family members, like my uncle Eddie who has taught me a lot about fishing. My cousin works in the toolroom and he lets me watch him as he makes tools for earrings. I also get to see a lot of my grandfather who is the boss of the place. I do my reading and sometimes nap in his big leather chair.

Because my mom's workplace is so close to my cousin's house, I go there once a week to be her mother's helper. I love getting a chance to hold the baby and I'm learning how to deal with my demanding 4-year-old cousin.

I probably will go back to using more textbooks and workbooks in the fall, but it has been a great change to be with lots of other people every day. I'm getting the chance to know my family better and it makes me feel special to go to work with my mom.

Rekindling Love for Learning

From Stephen Menta (NY):

Throughout my educational life there have been many changes. My mother took me out of the public school in fifth grade. At that time we had a schoolroom, a desk for each of us, a blackboard, and textbooks for every subject. In sixth grade we decided the schoolroom approach was not what homeschooling was really all about, and I did most of my work in my bedroom, and had my mom check it.

Due to the fact that my mother wasn't confident about teaching me math, I chose to go to a private school for seventh grade. I found that in time I hated being in a school setting, learning their way and what they thought I should believe. I continued to go to that school for eighth grade. However, by the second semester, all my fire for learning was extinguished. Even my teachers thought it would be more beneficial for me to be home-educated. Thus, in ninth grade I came back home. Because my love for learning had died, it was very hard for my mom to get me to do any work. Finally, I realized that in order to be someone in this world I needed an education. At this point I had tutors for math, English, and science.

In tenth grade I no longer needed tutors because my zeal for learning and life returned. I became very independent and read a

great deal of books. I should mention that I also had been working on a farm since I was 12. However, at this point I became an integral part of the help on the farm because my boss had to have back surgery right at planting time. Consequently, the books were set aside and from sun-up to sundown I worked planting fields, milking cows, fixing fence posts, and doing whatever else I could to help out. There is no way I could have been of service to my neighbor in this situation if I was in school.

Eleventh grade has had the biggest changes. We are now enrolled with Clonlara because our local community college would not accept my mother's paperwork for early enrollment; therefore, we decided to make this change to make college entrance a little smoother. I have been doing carpentry work on our new church building, steadily working on the farm, and I worked at Ponderosa for about six months. Due to the fact that I have been working so much, my mom and I were worried about my credits. Our Clonlara teacher, Lynette Owen, showed us how to count real-life experiences as school. She also showed me where I already have 17 of the 21 credits I need.

My biggest change is yet to come. In September I will be traveling with a minister to Europe for six months and to Mexico for one month. While I am with him I will cover geography, English, and history. More than likely, all these subjects will be real-life experiences that I will document for credits.

Homeschooling has opened up many doors for me that would never have been possible if I had stayed in school. I think homeschooling is one of the best decisions our family ever made.

Change is a Way of Life

From Jon-Mark Menta (NY):

Although my brother and I have been raised in the same household, our educational experiences have been quite different. First of all, I have never sat at a desk in all my eight years of homeschooling. However, change has been a way of life for me. When I was about 8, my mother felt we needed more socialization. Therefore, she signed us up for homeschool soccer. I hated it. After I consistently complained, she let me quit. I didn't feel I needed the activity, because we live in the country and I am very active. Furthermore, I had all the friends I wanted and was very content to keep it that way.

Another example of change was when I was 13 and my mother decided to send me to an enrichment study skills course. This course was the worst class I've ever taken. The teacher was boring and he treated the students like we were stupid. After *much* arguing, my parents said I didn't have to go and finish the course.

I think I should mention that I am not the book-learner type. I prefer everything hands on. This has made it difficult for my mom because she was raised in a traditional school setting.

However, she does try to help me find what I am looking for by trying to expose me to activities I am interested in around our community. Consequently, I only use one textbook, and that is for math. Also, for the first time I have a tutor, for math. This has been a positive change because I was at a place where I could no longer teach myself.

Another change came when I decided to take drum lessons. My father found a teacher that he thought would be good. However, after about six months my father felt that we could find someone better. My dad and I discussed finding another teacher, and we chose someone we both knew. This was a hard decision, in a sense, because I felt bad about leaving my first teacher. I let my dad tell him we would no longer need his services. I know we made the right decision because my drum technique has improved greatly under my new teacher. I am learning so much from him that I am glad we made this change.

Although I am a hands-on learner, last year (which would have been eighth grade although I don't think of grades), I chose to attend an upper-level entomology class at Binghamton University. My mother made the first initial contact. I went and met with the professor and he said I could come to the class. I didn't have to take any tests (they were way beyond me) but I attended all the lectures, labs, and field trips. I had to write a term paper and had to catch, mount, and label, in Latin, 70 bugs. This was a great experience. I met new friends and learned a lot about insects, but beyond that I learned what it is like to go to college. I could see first hand what kind of commitment it takes to attain a higher education. I enjoyed this change because it was something I was interested in, unlike that horrible study skills class.

What I have found in my experience is that change is a way of life, so I have to be ready to change as opportunities present themselves to me.

New Materials and a New Schedule

From Nicholas Early (PA):

About a year ago my mom taught me Suzuki piano. It usually didn't go well because I was bored. So I decided to teach myself. My mom taught me how to read music, and then I taught myself piano note by note. That worked so much better that we kept doing it.

The Spanish program I was using was boring. When I started using it, the tape would say a sentence and then I would have to repeat it. I just wasn't getting any better, so at the next homeschoolers' support group meeting, some friends came over and they brought along their program. It was called The Learnables. What made it more interesting than the other program was the sound effects. They were really funny, especially where the baby was crying.

And finally, we made a change in my schedule. I never had any off days. In other words, I had to do all my studies every day of the year. I asked my parents about changing this and finally, after a bit of convincing, I now get two days off a week.

Doing More Formal Schoolwork

From Sarabeth Matilsky (NJ):

Up until last year, I hadn't used many textbooks, workbooks, etc. But then Mom said, "If you haven't learned your multiplication tables by the time you're 12, you have got to 'bite the bullet,' sit down, and do it! No child of mine is leaving this house without learning multiplication."

Well, a year passed (I was 12), and I did hardly any schoolwork. When I turned 13, Mom put her foot down and I started doing math, geography, science, and "educational" stuff like that. (Mom only put her foot down about math, but I chose to go "whole hog" and do geography, science, etc.) In four months, I had brought myself up to grade level, but it didn't just happen. I worked for an hour a day on math, and used the microscope,

bought science kits, put up maps, and a whole lot more.

But then I stopped. I don't know exactly why, but I just got burned out. So, for three months I just read what I wanted (mostly Agatha Christies), did what math I wanted (mostly none). I still like science, so I continued that, but not as much.

Then, last month, I started to do some research on medieval clothes, because I am making a Renaissance dress to wear to a Renaissance festival in our area. Also, there is an organization called Society for Creative Anachronism, which tries to recreate crafts, clothing, names, etc. from medieval time. So I can wear the dress there, too. I got out three books on costume/clothing, and two I used to make the dress, but the third was about how clothing changed through the centuries, how people's ideas about what is pretty changed, the messages in clothes that different people wear, etc. I *really* liked it! (I haven't read an Agatha Christie since!) I have since finished it, and started *The Hobbit* and *The Mother Tongue: English and How it Got That Way*, which is really interesting.

I really want to make it clear, though, that I didn't just sit around and suddenly know the multiplication tables. Maybe it happens to some people, but I haven't found that I can suddenly know something like division or multiplication.

In a few days, I am planning to sit in on a day at school, so next year I might take a class or maybe try out for shows there. If I do, I'm sure this will bring new changes into my life!

A Series of Schedule Changes

From Geoffrey Litwack (PA):

My homeschooling life has been nothing but a series of schedule changes. My family has been great about letting me experiment with different approaches to structuring my time and they have allowed me to change my mind at will. None of these changes has come about without lots of thought on my part and lots of discussion with my family.

For example, most recently, as I approached the middle of my eighth grade year, and stared ninth grade (first year of high school! aahhh!) in the face, I looked at the way my day went and decided it needed change. I had a lot of time locked up in my personal projects, while basically keeping on par with my schoolwork. I thought that instead, I'd like a good academic backbone with time for some outside activities, while still pursuing my own interests. I found, perplexed, that there were not enough hours in the day.

I decided to place upon my own shoulders a number of textbooks, using for the first time in my homeschooling experience a very rigid and traditional curriculum. I thought that if I added some "super" structure I might actually get more time for myself. I ventured out into the field of so-called classic literature, I took up a musical instrument, and after some debate (with myself and my parents), I wound up taking some courses at the local high school in topics I was interested in. To make a long story short, I found a way to juggle all the things I wanted to do, after long periods of frustration.

I feel now that I did the right thing. I enjoy (for the time being, anyway) a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction, and I have discovered many new things that I enjoy that I doubt I would have encountered the old way. Do I think I want more change, in the future? Absolutely. That's what homeschooling is for me, the flexibility that would be squashed in school.

Geoffrey's mother, Ellie Litwack, adds:

Since Geoff wrote this piece he has decided to give up the rigid curriculum (after completing half of it) as its ancillary requirements were a waste of time. He is yet again moving on to a new way of using his day. Homeschooling for us has been an exquisite dance between personal goals and the requirements of societal and institutional realities. Or, put another way, we are philosophically of the unschooling mind, trying to minimally respect and credit the institution of school.

Letting Go of School Ways

From Larla Maloney (NJ):

I began homeschooling in December 1989 during winter vacation of fourth grade. I was 9. My mom and dad had gone to school, my brother was going to school, and until then I had gone to school. As you can imagine, we basically did "school at home" that first year. We had schedules with four hours of schoolwork and Mom had a daily planner like teachers use to plan every day with specific times for everything. She had teacher's manuals for almost every one of my textbooks and workbooks - math, science, history, geography, creative writing, grammar, spelling, and handwriting. Mom picked out eight language arts books for me to read and do book reports on. I also had my regular activities - ballet, artwork, bike riding, walking, swimming, baseball and basketball, reading and writing for fun, playing with friends, etc.

This system did not work. I felt overrun by schoolwork. Mom felt overrun by corrections and plans, and we both felt overwhelmed by schedules. We decided to change.

The next school year we did not have a daily planner. Instead Mom would write out what I had to do that day and I would cross each thing off as I did it. I wrote down what I did each day. Mom had fewer teacher's manuals and I had fewer textbooks - only Saxon Algebra 1/2, a science workbook, a history book which we divided in half to make it take two years, an economics workbook, a philosophy workbook, and my eight language arts books. The work was challenging but not too time-consuming. I began writing 2-3 pages on the answers to the questions in the history book. When I got blisters from writing so much, I began to answer them orally to Mom or Dad. The economics book was easy and I finished it in a few months, and I found the philosophy book to be so easy and boring that I stopped doing it after a month or two.

We began to let go of our school ways gradually. We began to take work with us on day trips, my book reports and other projects got more creative, and it became a family joke to make a school subject out of anything fun I did during school hours.

During our third year we kept basically the same system as the previous year, with even fewer schoolbooks - Saxon Algebra 1, the second part of the history book, my eight language arts books, and science experiments out of books. We got a computer in early April and I started working on that and learning how to use it, and I got a kayak in March, half of which I paid for through working for Dad. I still kept up my activities in my free time.

During the summer I approached my parents and told them that I wanted to take a science class. I wanted to do more in-depth work with lab equipment, and I felt I needed some guidance in this area. We decided to ask at the high school. They said

I could take a science course, but it would have to be Introduction to Physical Science.

This year I wanted to be in control of my own schedule. I was going to do it without notes from Mom - simply do things when I had time. My work this year was: Saxon Algebra 2, two social studies/history reports, my eight language arts books, a math correspondence course called American Mathematics Correspondence School, and the science class. Simple enough, but I also had many activities. Due to all of these activities, I barely had time for schoolwork. My work got more and more slowly paced. I felt this happening and did not like it, but continued until one day Mom got fed up and told me I had to start working again. We calmed down and talked and decided to go back to the system we had before.

I'm ahead of my parents in math now and have begun having trouble with the "why" part of things, though I'm still doing OK with the "how" part. I finished one history report (I picked Australian Aborigines and Mom picked Ancient Egypt). The Aborigines took seven months, and now I'm working on Egypt. I've read many long books this year that were not on my list, so Mom added some on (mostly Sci-Fi) and took some off, and now I only have one book left on the list. The American Mathematics Correspondence School has been fun when I have had time. My experience of taking the science class at the high school has been interesting. The review and tests and doing problems in class were boring, but the labwork and problems at home were fun and made up for it. I got straight A's and am taking Honors Biology next year. The class wasn't exactly the way I would have liked it to be, but it was fun, and I learned some stuff.

This system did not work. I felt overrun by schoolwork, Mom felt overrun by corrections and plans, and we both felt overwhelmed by schedules. We decided to change.

Our homeschooling has changed over the years, but I have never felt the desire to go back to school full-time. More than our methods have changed, I think my whole family's attitude has changed, and I strongly believe that above all, as a person, I have changed.

Changing Math Book, Piano Teacher

From Robbie Pippin (VA):

I tried using ABeka math when I was about 12, and I didn't like it. It was boring. You learned something and then you were never given the chance to practice. I told my parents I hated it. They didn't like it either. We started looking for another math book, and that took a while. Eventually I tried Saxon. Saxon is hard but I like it. You get the chance to practice what you've learned.

Another change I made has to do with piano. I asked to take piano lessons through our rec. center, but then I didn't like the teacher. She was always breathing down your neck. I didn't like the piano book, either. I told this to my parents and I asked to quit. My parents weren't too thrilled, because they felt that it was wasted money, but it was my decision. Months later my dad found a lady nearby who taught piano by the Suzuki method. My parents asked me if I wanted to give her a try. I liked it and I'm staying with it for now. I wanted to do music because it's something I had never tried.

Most of my changes come because I'm getting older and I want to try more things and different ways of doing things. I feel that my parents support my changes pretty well. Sometimes they make it difficult, like by wanting me to practice piano for a certain amount of time when I don't want to. Sometimes they set goals that are not my goals. Most of the time I go with it and see how it goes. I usually can discuss these goals and find out why my parents suggested them. Sometimes they make sense.

Good and Bad Changes

From Aleta Rees (MN):

Homeschool is part of my life. Every day my life is at least a teensy bit different from the day before. So is my homeschooling. Now that I'm bigger, my life is a lot different from what it was when I was little. I can't remember a time when I did not play piano or play dolls, but now I have more work to do, so I don't play all the time like I used to. Sometimes I want to do my work (washing dishes, cleaning my room, doing math), and sometimes I have to do it even when I don't want to. Some of the things I do now are the same as they were when I was little, such as math, piano, reading, and storytelling. I love these things very, very much. When I was little I needed help. Now I can read and write by myself.

I love reading, and I don't remember a time when I didn't read. Now I read every time I'm in the car. I read every night until very late, and my parents don't usually interfere. If they come in and tell me it's too late, I plead with them to let me keep on reading, or to read to me. But because I stay up so late, I need to sleep a little later in the morning, and we have a shorter time to work and play. No matter what time I wake up, we have to leave the house at the same time for our scheduled appointments. So one day Mom said, "No more reading. Lights out. You have to start waking up earlier." Then I couldn't fall asleep. So I thought out two peoms and the next day wrote them down and sent them to some friends. Now Mom doesn't usually try to stop me from reading at night. I guess she figures that stopping me from reading won't help me fall asleep earlier. When I'm tired enough, I fall asleep. I'm getting better at waking up earlier.

A big change was when I wanted to write down stories, not just tell them. So now I'm writing a book. I used to have to dictate my stories or letters. Now, unless it's something complicated like this article, I do it myself. For this article, I'm working together with my mom. She helps me organize my ideas and helps me write, because I can't write fast enough or neat enough yet.

Math was a big problem this year. It was very boring. Saxon Math, Grade 2 had to be done with a teacher. I don't like to wait for Mom to be free to help me, and I don't like to go through all the things I already know very well. I like reading stories that have multiplication facts in them, and then I memorize them. I hope to finish the grade 2 book this summer.

With piano, Mom used to sit with me all the time, and I wanted her to. Now I beg her not to. She wants me to repeat things a hundred times, and I hate repeating. I am too impatient. As long as I am practicing well, she lets me do it my way. Sometimes, not often anymore, she gives me no choice: "I'm going to sit with you."

With sports, art, and music, I decide what I want to do, and Mom lets me do whatever she can fit in. I wanted to be on a swim team and take swim lessons. I wanted to be in a play, and she let me audition (I got a part). Sometimes my legs are tired, and I don't want to go to whatever activity I have that day. Sometimes Mom lets me skip it, but now and then she suggests I go to gymnastics class even when I feel too tired. When I am there, I have a wonderful time, and I don't want to leave. Usually, though, Mom leaves the choice to me. I like being at home, so I choose carefully what art or science classes I sign up for. I want enough time for myself.

Some changes have happened because my life and my ability

changed. Those were all good changes. Some happened because the rest of my family changed their interests and activities. Then I merely adjusted. Some changes were not what I wanted. They happened because of other people changing. For example, my friend Rachel started kindergarten and went all day. Any time I wanted to call her, she was in school or tired from school. We're still friends, but we live far apart. It is hard to get together. Then a new homeschooling family moved into our city. During almost a year together, we became close friends. When their parents decided homeschooling wasn't working for them, they suddenly isolated their children from all homeschoolers, so their children would accept school better. That was very hard. Another change was when my piano teachers moved and I got new ones. Since I liked my new teachers, it wasn't too bad, but when Mary Jane, my singing teacher, had to move, that was the worst time. She was very special. These kinds of changes are the ones I hate.

According to What I Need and Want

From Dana Rees (MN):

At first thought it seemed like I haven't changed anything in homeschooling. I still do math and piano as top priorities. I write, I read, and I do other activities. I still need to read Hillyer's *A Child's History of the World* and *A Child's Geography of the World* because Mom says I should, and they're hard to get into. So I worry sometimes that I'm not learning what the other kids my age are supposed to be learning. Then I think I'd better make some changes.

When I think about it awhile, I realize I've made lots of changes in my homeschooling according to what I need to do and what I want to do. I taught myself how to read and spell by reading primers and copying them on paper. My mom was busy and it was fun doing it myself. I taught myself cursive from a handwriting skills workbook.

My family has been great about letting me experiment with different approaches to structuring my time and they have allowed me to change my mind at will.

Mom and I make some changes together, like switching this year from Bob Jones to Saxon math. It was a good decision. Last year one of the hardest choices I made was taking a break from ballet and gymnastics, even though I was really serious about ballet. Mom helped me decide because I had a knee injury and none of us had time for me to go to ballet, but this year I caught up with both ballet and gymnastics. We (my sister, brother, and I) are now involved in a play for the first time. I decide what activities I want to do, and so long as I do them well and don't neglect my responsibilities, Mom usually tries to help me. Some things just can't be fit in, and we decide that together.

Some changes happen because there is no choice. Last fall I injured my wrist in soccer, and I had to stop piano. I could not start violin like I wanted to. In January I started piano again and began enjoying my music more than before. In March I added violin and now I practice better than before, and I love music more than ever.

The hardest thing about homeschooling is to have enough time for what I both need and want to do. So I deliberately planned fewer activities this summer. Our scheduled activities used to be too spread out, so with Mom's blessings, we have scheduled our activities to allow more time to get things done at home and to have time for rest. For example, our music lessons are now late Friday afternoons. That gives us a whole day at home before we have to leave.

Sometimes I think that if I went to school, I'd have more friends. Last year was my first on the YMCA swim team, and the kids mocked me out because I was slow. Finally I made four friends and learned that the nasty kids were mean to everyone. They mocked me out because I was new. They don't know how to get along with new people. I see kids in my ballet class fighting about who goes to a better school, and they're not willing to become friends based on their common interests. I guess that going to school wouldn't help in getting friends. I'd also have to change my activities. Besides, I've always wanted to choose by myself what work I do, how I do it, and when I do it. I know I couldn't do that in school.

I think as we grow up we'll have to make more changes, but now that I think about it, we have already changed a lot and we can keep making adjustments as we need them.

Susan Rees, Dana and Aleta's mother, adds:

Homeschooling has become a way of life for our family. It defines who we are, not just what we do. We initially plunged into these uncharted waters as a reaction to what appeared to be unsatisfactory options. Now we school our children outside of the traditional school system because, regardless of available alternatives, we each believe this is the best way to enjoy life and let the children develop their potentials to the fullest.

The biggest homeschooling change for me is attitude. The question isn't if we will continue to homeschool, but how. All three children will undoubtedly eventually seek advanced academic credentials or the equivalent, and it is a challenge for Bill and me to make sure that enough of the right guidance is available to each at the right time. I am no longer worried about the school system. Each child's progress is clear to me.

The annual testing required by Minnesota presumably evaluates the child against an arbitrary standard of knowledge. Since our children tested well, our relationship with the local school officials has been most cordial. That has removed a lot of tension I felt about interfacing with the system at its pace and not ours.

Initially I felt constrained by always having the children with me. Simple tasks like keeping a doctor's appointment or grocery shopping became difficult interruptions. Maybe it's just that they're older and maybe it's that I trust them to make valid choices to occupy their time in my absence, but I no longer feel restricted. The children are always more than self-sufficient. They seem to have control over their own lives. They count on us to be there for them, but they don't rely on us to entertain or direct them.

I guess the most important fact is that the kids' education flows from their interests and their own expanding knowledge base. I love to share their moments of insight and discovery. Sometimes these moments happen when they seem to be fooling around. Sometimes they happen when we're working together. The children essentially control their own priorities, within guidelines we set. Sometimes we have to set limits and help them evaluate their priorities, but learning is living, and knowledge has value for its own sake. It's not really possible to impose that effectively on someone else. It's equally impossible for that process to be static. The bottom line is that we continually change and encourage the children to lead the way.

New Perspectives on School Dropouts

How is a dropout different from a homeschooler? Dropouts may be out of school illegally (unless they wait until the legal school-leaving age). They may not have their family's support, and since society views dropping out as a failure, dropouts are more likely than homeschoolers to have a negative view of themselves. Most dropout programs focus on talking kids out of leaving school or persuading them to return. Yet with a change of perspective, dropping out could be seen in a more positive, less stigmatized way, and programs could focus on helping these kids make the most of their lives outside of school. Here are two people who are working toward this goal.

Teny O. Gross writes in the January/February 1993 issue of The Boston Review, *"On one of my trips to Dorchester [Massachusetts] I met Eugene Rivers, Pastor of the Azusa Christian Community. The members of Rivers's church are professionals - lawyers, academics, computer analysts - who live and work in Four Corners [neighborhood]. Committed to overcoming the crisis in inner-city African-American communities, they have chosen to live out that commitment by tying their own fate to the fate of their brothers and sisters in that neighborhood."*

Alan Shaw, one of the members of Azusa, works with young people in the neighborhood, many of whom have dropped out of school. In the following interview he describes that work and the vision behind it.

Can you describe your summer program?

We work with about 20-25 kids each summer, and about half of that group tends to be dropouts. We talk to them about our vision, which is one of people having lots of opportunities to do things for their neighbors, to share their skills and talents. When we started the program, our goal was to give the kids a way to offer something to their community, their neighbors, that the neighbors would value and even pay for. We struggled with the question of what we - I and the other person I was working with - could give to kids through apprenticeship. I have some skills in electronics, so that summer we taught the kids to repair appliances - simple household appliances. By the end of the summer, neighbors were bringing appliances and paying the kids to repair them.

How did you let neighbors know that the kids were available to do this?

Going to school is really dropping out. You're dropping out of your community and your family when you focus on school, and, later, when you focus only on your career.

We gave out a lot of flyers! We tried to get the kids to go door-to-door and talk to people, to say, you might have something broken in your house, please give me a chance to fix it. But they found it very difficult to do that. Interpersonal stuff is very difficult for them right now, since so many people distrust each other, blame each other. There's a sort of generation gap; these young people have trouble approaching their neighbors because they feel that the neighbors don't trust them or don't like them.

What we've been trying to do since the first year is broaden the idea so that anyone who has any skills or resources, and who is willing to take on an apprentice, can get connected with some of the kids. And if people have things in their home, or in the neighborhood, that they would like to see done, maybe they could give the kids a chance to do it, instead of paying some institution a lot of money to do it. Now we're talking about organizing a food co-operative - which would save people money because they could buy food in bulk - and getting the kids to be the ones who implement the program and the ones who get the money that is being saved. So we're trying to focus on what needs to be done and on how we can integrate the young people into it.

The kids who dropped out of school - at what point have they usually left?

It seems to be around the ninth or tenth grade. One of the kids I'm closest to, Al, he failed to pass the seventh grade, and then he went through a long program to get back to the right grade, but then he failed the ninth grade, and he's still in ninth grade, but this year will be his last, I think. He'll probably drop out after this.

Do you get a sense of why they drop out?

Boys tend to be the largest group. There are a lot of girls getting pregnant, and that tends to be the most likely reason that a girl would drop out. But for boys, there seems to be some instability, some issues that they're desperate to resolve that they're not going to resolve in school. There could be some family issues that they really have to work on, problems at home that keep them from feeling good about going to school. There could be some issues with gangs who go to the same school. Or it could be sometimes just a situation where they feel that they aren't succeeding, that the school has made them into a failure, so they're trying to find an identity which does not have this failure in it, so they leave and try to be successful somewhere else.

A lot of people think that school is the only way, that if you can't succeed in that setting, and you drop out, you are a failure.

School has done a good job of making everybody accept, at least to some degree, that they're a failure. School is about labeling people. There are a lot of kids who are just devastated by the labels from the beginning to the end. I'm going into a middle school right now, doing some work with software, and seeing these young men has a big effect on me. They're very angry, and it's sad, because the teachers don't seem to be able to take the time to think through *why* they're angry. So it

becomes a matter of trying to battle the kids, get them to submit - which they don't do, and then they become discipline problems, and they're labeled bad kids.

You don't see many black males in the schools. You see black women, and you do see some white males, not many, but the lack of the sort of father figure in these young people's lives exacerbates the problem. They go to school and there's no one that they can connect with. I understand that when I'm in that environment, I get stared at, just for being a black male in there. They're wondering what my relationship is to this institution. People say, go into the schools, be a role model, and all the kids will want to be just like you. But that doesn't make very much sense to me. What tends to happen is that kids feel abandoned if they're not given real relationships with people. So if you go into a school to be a role model, rather than to build real relationships with these kids, then you're just going to be yet another person who didn't really care that deeply about them, who just kind of brushed them aside. I think it's better not to be so interested in what you're going to show this kid about some field or whatever. You want to try to really care for these kids, try to get to know who they are, and share yourself with them. They're asking for real relationships with people, and people don't want to give them real relationships. The whole idea of role models is that all people need is good *images*, with no real substance.

How come you choose to work with kids outside of the school system?

I feel that to address the struggles these kids have, in the way that I would like to, I would have to be able to criticize and oppose what's going on in the schools. But I realize that there are a lot of people who are trying really hard to present something to these kids, there are teachers who are giving their lives daily for these kids, and that makes it hard for me to criticize. I sense that the kids aren't as interested in talking about this teacher or that teacher; they're trying to get a more general sense of, "Am I a valid person? School is saying I'm not, so is school not really valid for me?" And I'd have to say yes. So it would be harder to say that if I were inside the system.

Do you find yourself able to talk honestly about school with kids, working with them in the context that you do?

Yes, I do sometimes. I feel that no matter what you do, it's good if you feel good about it, if you feel that you've succeeded at it in some way, so when I see kids having trouble, I'm not so quick to suggest that they drop out. It's not clear to me that they won't sometimes get a sense of overcoming enormous odds by staying in school. But I also talk to kids about leaving. If they have already dropped out, I treat it as a valid decision. Many kids are

Grace Llewellyn writes:

I'm planning to start a support group this September, called "Project Rise-Out," for local high school dropouts. I'm so tired of hearing about the dropout "problem." I don't see a problem; I see a tremendous amount of potential. Almost all programs for dropouts are terribly disrespectful, based on the idea that dropping out is a mistake. I hope that Project Rise-Out will be different. It will be based on the realization that without school, a person has a huge amount of time and energy at her disposal - and there are thousands of incredible opportunities available to her if she's not too stuck, guilt-ridden, or pessimistic to stand in her own way.

I did some preliminary groundwork last year and interviewed six local dropouts (individually). I discussed with them two possibilities: starting a support group and starting a cooperative resource/learning center. All felt positive about both ideas. Several emphasized that although dropouts had each other for support and encouragement, that wasn't enough. They pointed out that there were no adults - let alone "programs" or "officials" or voices of authority - telling them that dropping out could be a positive choice.

One 16-year-old girl told me that she'd enrolled in a GED preparation course at the local community college. Part of the required curriculum was a "careers" class. The girl had read *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* and had no intention of conforming to society's dismal predictions for dropouts; she planned on becoming a cultural anthropologist without necessarily attending college. The careers class, however, focused on activities such as having students practice filling out job applications for institutions such as Agri-Pak (local food processing plant) and McDonald's. The teacher was upset and confused with the girl's bigger ideas, admitting that she "couldn't deal with" that kind of thinking.

Obviously, there is a *huge* need for these kids to hear from adults who respect their choice to leave school and who can realistically (vs. pessimistically) give them some sense of their bizillions of choices. I want to be one of those voices of sanity and encouragement. It won't be a full-time project for me - at first just a couple of hours a week facilitating the support group. If we actually attempt to create a learning/resource center, my time investment will expand significantly. Since I don't plan on charging the kids and don't want to be constrained by any requirements attached to a grant, it will be volunteer work unless I can make it pay a little by writing about it. I hope I'll be able to write about it in a way that both allows other people to learn from my trials and errors and also encourages mainsteam (non)thinkers to view dropouts a little differently.

Here's part of the press release I'll be sending to the local media:

Project Rise-Out: Free Program for Dropouts With a Different Angle. A free weekly support, discussion, and activity group is forming for teenaged high school dropouts. The first meeting will take place on Monday, September 13, 7 pm at [location undetermined]. Location of later meetings will be announced at the first meeting. Unlike most programs for dropouts, this one will not urge dropouts to go back to school or even to necessarily get their GED. Instead, it will focus on the diverse opportunities available to each teenager, based on their interests rather than on their status as dropouts.

One Tuesday, September 7, group facilitator Grace Llewellyn will give a presentation for parents of dropouts, entitled "Beyond the Dropout 'Problem:' Creating a Home Environment for Success and Happiness." This talk is free of charge and will be held at 7 pm at [location undetermined]. It will acquaint parents with the principles of the discussion group and give them a chance to ask questions.

Facilitator Grace Llewellyn is a former teacher. She is also the author of *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* and the editor of *Real Lives: 11 Teenagers Who Don't Go to School*. In the new discussion group, she plans to show dropouts how they can adapt homeschooling principles to fit their lives and to regain control over their educations. She will also offer free consultations to individuals in the group, to further explore options in life and work.

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interested in the GED, because they want to have some sense of finishing something.

It would be interesting to think about how to make the summer program available throughout the year, so that this would be an option for dropouts during the school year.

Yes, that's definitely a dream. One of the limitations of the summer program is that it's still not fully a part of the life of the community. Not enough of the neighbors are doing it. What I'm trying to do this summer is hook up a neighborhood, local computer network, so that neighbors would get together and plan out things like this food co-op, and also we're going to have a summer festival - in other words, have a lot of people come out and show what they have done and can do, and suggest to other neighbors that they ought to start getting involved with these projects. We're trying to have a drop-in center in the neighborhood where people can always, any time during the year, put their heads together with other people, think up things that they can do and find other people to do them with. And if kids aren't in school but are out in the community during the day instead, they can help. People have so much energy and time that they aren't really able to envision a use for - they're trapped in a world where they feel like all the wonderful things that are being done can't be done by them.

So what's another way to look at dropping out, besides the conventional view?

I think that going to school is really dropping out. You're dropping out of your community and your family, when you focus on school, and, later, when you focus only on your career. What these kids have found, once they've left school, is that they can't leave issues of community and family behind, they can't turn away from the challenge of staying connected to people. My challenge is to figure out how to help them with that, help them break away from the bitterness they feel - because there's a lot of bitterness, when the world is calling you a failure. The ones who have dropped out feel that they have failed, that they're at the bottom of society. Sometimes it hits at a really subtle level, at the level of how we talk to kids about dropping out. I could say, "You ought to be in school," or I could say, "Good, you're available during the day to help with all these things that need to be done."

So dropping out of school could be seen, in a way, as dropping back in to the concerns of the community and the family.

Yes, there is a dream in my mind that communities would be so tightly-knit that they would be like villages again, where people say, I'm going to believe in these neighbors of mine, in this small area where we live. If they say that, the sky's the limit, if people can really believe that the things they do are signficant rather than thinking it's only signficant when the mayor does it. Then you have a chance for deeply meaningful relationships, and I believe those relationships would solve many of the crises that these kids have. People who have relationships with other people have so many more resources to draw on, during tough times, than people who don't.

I was just at an eighth grade graduation the other day, it was mostly black and hispanic kids, and mostly poor, and what the speakers were telling them, basically, was that if they only had an education, they'd be like Donald Trump or something. The idea was that there was something that they didn't have, that they needed, that was going to make all the difference in the world. Yet to me, there were so many people with so much talent in that room. It would have been nice to talk about what they *had* accomplished. But the implication was that a lot of the parents in the room, who hadn't graduated from high school, had never amounted to anything, and it was sad, because one of the kids who was speaking was saying basically the same thing. They come to believe that the only successful people are people who have gone to school, so then they don't recognize the talents of the people who haven't finished school, even when those people are their own parents.

It's a paradox, isn't it, because so many programs and efforts aimed at these kids focus on saying, "You've got to stay in school," and then that has the effect of making the kids who don't stay in school feel worse than they would have otherwise.

Yeah, it's a myth. People always believe that if they just get one more credential, or one more academic experience, then their life is going to take off. It's just amazing that there are so many needs that could be addressed right now, so many things that could be done, but people say they're going to wait. I was asked to give a talk to a bunch of kids in a summer youth program, and it was very difficult to come up with something to say, because I knew what the program heads wanted me to say, about the value of education, but what I felt was important to emphasize was how important it was to be connected to each other, how much that makes a difference. I told them to find people who can, with you, start to be a healing force. Corporate America wants your money, but for folks who don't have a lot of money, when they put together a food co-operative, for example, they can see that because they didn't have a million dollars they had to resolve problems by engaging with each other.

If readers know of any other people or programs who view dropouts in nontraditional ways, we'd love to hear about them.

Watching Children Learn continued from page 14

Setting Up Art Apprenticeship

[SS:] In GWS #87, Judy Garvey wrote about how her son Matthew had found several apprenticeships with adults around the country, and I added some comments about how it's OK for kids to want help in setting up these kinds of things. I had a chance to be reminded of this again when I helped a local homeschooler, Julie D'Arcangelo, find an art apprenticeship. Last fall, when Julie was 17, she wanted to do something with her interest in art, but she wasn't sure what. When she met with me, I talked about the possibility of volunteering at a museum or art gallery, as one kind of experience, or the possibility of working directly with an artist, as another. Julie was interested in finding out more about both these options.

I knew more about how to volunteer with museums than I did about how to work with artists, so we began there. Most museums already have volunteer programs, so it was easy to call two of the major art museums in the Boston area and ask for information. The bigger the institution, the more formal and rigid its programs tend to be, of course. Large art museums seem either to have programs wherein one can learn how to lead tours (which involves pretty extensive training) or opportunities to do clerical work in the various offices. The latter might be less interesting, but as with all such work, if you keep your eyes and ears open as you do it, you can pick up a lot. While talking about museums with Julie I also suggested the possibility of visiting on her own, or with a friend, and trying to hook up with (or at least observe) the art students who might be sketching the paintings.

I also called a few galleries in the city and found out that they often appreciate volunteers who are willing to sit at the gallery desk and keep watch or answer questions. Again, this could be fairly tedious but it could also lead to other opportunities.

After I'd made a few of these phone calls, Julie began to feel that she was in fact more interested in trying to work directly with an artist. Here I had to think more creatively about how to approach the idea. I remembered that when Nancy Wallace was telling me about the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where her daughter Vita had taken some classes, she mentioned that art students might appreciate help with things like preparing canvasses, or even cleaning up. Since apprenticeship means offering your help in exchange for the chance to watch or ask questions, it seems to me that once you understand how you can be helpful, it's possible to suggest apprenticing even to someone who might not have thought of it before. In other words, once I knew that art students had tasks with which someone else could help, I was able to think of how Julie might fit in.

The next step was figuring out how to find local artists. The first thing I thought of was a little store nearby called The Cambridge Artists Co-operative. The store sells art, including lots of crafts, jewelry, and sculpture, by local artists. Taking a chance, I called them and asked if their artists ever needed help with various tasks and if they would be willing to post a sign saying that a young person was willing to help out in exchange for the chance to learn about the artist's work. They said we were welcome to post the sign.

At this point, I was making all the phone calls, with Julie sitting right there listening. To echo my earlier point about help, I didn't feel it made sense to say to Julie, "You have to make the calls yourself." In my experience, navigating the adult world on the telephone is often one of the *last* things young people come to feel comfortable doing. I know kids who will write letters of inquiry to strangers but still feel nervous about calling. Julie was able to hear what I said as I made these calls and perhaps to store up the information for the day when she would feel comfortable making calls herself. And I was able to check with her at every step to make sure that she was comfortable with what I was doing.

When it came to composing the sign to post at the artists' co-operative, I asked whether Julie wanted her own phone number listed. Would she feel comfortable handling the calls from people interested in her offer? No, she said. At this point she didn't feel ready to do that. All right, I put my own name and number so that the calls would come through me. Again, I didn't feel that Julie's not being ready to take calls from strangers meant that she wasn't mature enough to handle an apprenticeship; the two things don't necessarily require identical skills.

The first call that came in was from a jewelry-maker, who was delighted by the idea of having someone to help with the many tasks associated with jewelry making. I told Julie about this possibility. She was intrigued, but she wasn't sure that jewelry-making was as interesting to her as drawing, painting, and photography would be, so we waited a bit before calling the jewelry-maker back.

Meanwhile, I had spoken with a homeschooling father in the area, Paul Dobbs, who works at the Massachusetts College of Art. I'd asked him how we could let students know that Julie was willing to help out, and he offered to put a notice in the college's newsletter. Paul was extremely helpful, but I don't want to give the impression that one has to know someone in order to make these things work. I think that even if we hadn't known anyone at the college, we would have found out about the newsletter after asking around a bit.

Soon an artist telephoned and said that she was a painter and photographer and could imagine all sorts of ways in which Julie could help. When I told Julie about this, she was very excited and said

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that she felt she could return the call herself. She did, and they set up a meeting. As I write, they've been meeting about once a week for several months, and Julie's interest has grown so much that she plans to take courses at a local art institute this summer.

I had to tell the jewelry-maker that Julie had found something else, but it's worthwhile to return even the calls of people you don't want to work with, because that courtesy will keep the door open for the future or for another young person who does want that opportunity.

I've written about all the details of this process in the hopes of demystifying the "success story" of Julie's having found a great apprenticeship. Much of the time, the success story - that is, the fact of something having been achieved or having worked out well - is really the *end* of a long story of trying, not getting what one wanted, trying again, thinking of the challenge in a new way, and finally working something out.

Working With Legos

Natalie Mortensen (WA) writes:

Kellen gets up at 6:30 AM, snaps the light on, and plops down on the floor in front of his pile of Legos. Once in a while he'll build directly from various diagrams of sets, but mostly he's off on his own design, complete with ceaseless running commentary, punctuated with sound effects of guns, when appropriate, or blood-curdling yells, as another man has walked the plank, or been unseated in a joust.

"Do you want yogurt and granola for breakfast?" I call from the kitchen. After several unsuccessful attempts at trying to pry an answer out of him, I sigh, and put the bowl down in his place. He'll eat it sometime.

Kellen, now 6, first started working seriously (as opposed to "playing" - thank you, Nancy Wallace) with Legos at about 5 1/2. This was his first real area of daily focus, and he has continued to build with Legos for up to four hours per day. At first, even though we had homeschooled our daughter for six years, my old school head still got in the way, and the worrying wheels began to turn. He used to like to draw, I reasoned, or remember when we sang at the piano? His little brother Tristan distracted him into playing active imaginary games sometimes, but basically all he wanted to do was sit, hunched over, building and muttering to himself.

He still asked to read, however, and one day I read him a well-illustrated version of *Robin Hood*. He loved it, and immediately began incorporating these stories into his Lego work. Sherwood Forest was constructed, complete with little forest figures. These creations spilled over into the woods, in which I, as Sheriff of Nottingham, was pursued for days on end by Robin Hood and Little John. (Why do I always have to be the bad guy?)

Now we're on to castles, pirates, Vikings, and explorers, and he's beginning slowly to piece together historical events, asking questions such as, "Was King Arthur before or after Richard the Lion-hearted?" or "Were there pirates at the time of the American Revolution?"

His excitement is infectious when we are trying to discover whether the "Adventure Galley" had been a "good guy" ship before it was taken over by Captain Kidd. (The Time-Life series *The Seafarers* helped with our search.) Back to the Legos he goes to build a pirate ship. Tristan, 3, becomes heartily infected too.

I usually shy away from popular toys, and I used to put Legos in this category. But now I see how effectively and tangibly Kellen works with them, in order to concretize his imagination. They are, simply, an extension of himself and his learning process. As he said the other day, "I *need* Legos." And so he does.

Without a Curriculum

From a longer report that Jutta Mason of Ontario sent to her superintendent about her daughter Kate (15):

I would like to say something about the idea of curriculum. It is pretty evident from what you have read so far, I think, that we do not impose nor even offer Kate a curriculum in the sense of a collection of subjects of ascending levels of complexity which we think will take her where she ought to go. This kind of timetabling is one which I particularly want to avoid. That doesn't mean David and I don't have some quite strong views about what's worth studying (a lot). But in addition to our experiences with schooling, which was in both cases fairly long, we have also been shaped in our thinking by our experiences with Kate. When Kate was quite small, she had one of her sudden intense interests, and it was in arithmetic. I thought I should try to build on this interest; she resisted; I pushed a little; and inside of a month Kate began to hate arithmetic and to refuse any more exploration in that direction. This has not been the same with her brothers, both of whom learn differently from Kate and from one another. But in this case of Kate I learned to approach her with some extra care. When she was 8 1/2, she still could not/did not want to read, and I began to have some worries. Around her ninth birthday she began to read, and two months later she could read at the level of her literate friends. Then she expanded her reading, and now she reads the way very literate adults do. But she didn't want to write, not that year, nor the next two. When she was twelve someone (not, bless their hearts, the school board consultants, who were patient and had faith in us) suggested we should get her tested to diagnose the cause of her "inability" to write. We didn't. A month later, she began to want to keep a journal. Her writing was almost unreadable, even to her, at the beginning, because she had so much she wanted to say and she wrote so fast, but with time, it got much better. Since that time she has written a great deal. And up *until* the time she read and then wrote, the capacities of her memory seemed to develop in the way that is common in oral societies - something very impressive to me.

So these experiences lead me to press Kate only very judiciously. This means that, unlike her brothers, she does almost no math exercises and very little of what is called science. It may be that she is like C.S. Lewis, who was so utterly unable to pass even the elementary math course required to get into Oxford (Cambridge?) that he could never have got in at all had it not been for a loosening of the rules for WW I veterans. He did all right anyway. But I don't think she is like Lewis in this way. Neither is the world as it was in Lewis's time. Anxieties about pollution and weather alterations and soil loss are everywhere now. David makes radio programs about it, which Kate listens to. Changes in the virulence of organisms that make people sick give rise to a huge amount of public discussion. Kate often reads about these things in the newspaper. In other words, she is aware of issues about which she will, I think, eventually want to and *have to* know more.

German & Cantonese

Rebecca Beirne (Australia) writes:

When we were young, Mum and Dad decided to give us a gift of another language, because they figured that if one of them had been able to speak another language, we would have grown up bilingual - so they tried to do that another way by employing a native speaker who just spoke, read, sang, and played with us for one to two hours twice a week. I started from the week I was born. I've always loved it and thought it was normal to know and speak German and Chinese. I regarded my German teacher more as a friend than as a teacher, and we never had any formal, sit down, do this, do that, school-type lessons - although I call them German lessons for some reason.

We did a lot of singing, and the German friend, Angelika, helped us celebrate lots of traditional German festivals. I had 18 months off when Angelika was overseas when I was 2 1/2 to 4 years old, but it didn't seem to make any difference. When we were in Hamburg when I was 2 1/2, I was talking to a shop assistant who said I came from Stuttgart, which is in the south of Germany and where Angelika had come from. This really surprised my parents. It was a lot of fun being in Germany last year (when I was 10) because I was able to use the language a lot. In one incident, when we were in a post office, I was asking about weights and postage details about sending things back to Australia, and the postmaster asked why I could speak such good German while my parents were basically idiots.

I find that when I am trying to think of a sentence in Cantonese, I think in English

and then translate it into Cantonese, but I think in German. I don't have to translate, and sometimes when I am translating for my mother I notice that there are some things from German that you can't explain because they are just German. When I thought about this today, I wondered, "How did I manage to learn these colloqual words and phrases?"

My German lessons consist of any of the following or combinations of the following: reading, me to Elizabeth, Elizabeth to me (Elizabeth is my new Austrian-born friend who replaced Angelika when she got a full-time job), playing German board games, having conversations about everything from babies and fashion to the news and politics and the women's movement, watching German videos, doing crafts, etc.

Teaching somebody is an experience most children never get to have because most people think you won't learn anything if the teacher isn't an adult. Even if a kid is heaps more knowledgeable in that subject than a particular adult, they would still choose the adult as a teacher. But I teach three homeschooled children (aged 8, 7, and 7) German and it is really interesting.

I think that although I have done Cantonese for the same amount of time as German, I have not become fluent because we had so much changing of teachers (they were mostly students who studied in Australia and went back home after a couple of years or less), and, as it takes them a long time to get used to the idea of a white child learning Chinese, we never seemed to progress as quickly. They were lovely but not as in love with their language as Angelika was (though now I am really comfortable with my present teacher, Elaine).

Both my brothers have given up Cantonese, but this year (after a 12-month break) I decided to really push myself to get fluent in reading, writing, and speaking Cantonese, as I may want to be a diplomat when I grow up. I am finding Cantonese very interesting and don't realize how much time goes by when I am in it. I usually have a five-hour lesson twice a week and do about an hour's homework every day. I am really happy with my progress in every area except my speaking, but I'm getting better at that.

I have chosen to do Cantonese lessons in a more formal way because Cantonese is harder than German, I find, and requires much more memory work. For example, you have to write the lines in a very special order. It is not as if you can just learn 26 letters and then be able to read, write, and string words together. Each word is a different sound, except some words have the same sound and different meanings, or different meanings depending on whether you say the word high, low, or in the middle.

In my Cantonese lessons, Elaine reads through a chapter from the text, and then I read it a few times, and then we go through what it means. Then I read it through again. I do two chapters a week. In Cantonese schools they would take a week to do a chapter. During lessons we also might watch a movie - a cartoon or documentary - have a conversation with each other, or do exercises such as some words are all mixed up and I have to put them in a sentence. Cantonese is the only really formal lesson I do, and I really enjoy it.

Languages Without College

More from Ruth Freedman of Kentucky:

Abi just began her freshman year at the University of Louisville. She is mainly interested in languages and writing. She is the only one of my three who never darkened the door of a school, and her first few days, and now about three and a half weeks, at the university have given her personal experience with the very flawed system of public education - only of course one pays for this!

She is ready to seek out alternatives as she sees this set-up as a very poor way to learn most anything she's interested in, but especially languages. Of course I couldn't agree more. Do you know of any alternative types of programs available for folks who want to learn to speak, not just read and write, languages? I know about exchange students but we're not set up well for guests long-term.

[SS:] Maybe my reply will be useful to others in a similar situation:

... I've been giving some thought to how Abi could pursue her interest in languages outside of college. A few different kinds of ideas come to mind. There are certainly language institutes in many cities; I don't know what's available there, but around here there are all sorts of them. How good they are, though, or how different they are from a traditional school, is an open question — probably they differ and it would take some calling around to find out in what ways. Then, Middlebury College in Vermont is known for its summer language programs, which are supposed to be quite intensive, and that might be interesting to investigate.

But beyond this, if Abi is interested in thinking about how to learn languages without being in a classroom at all, I have some ideas about this, too, although in many cases their feasability would depend on whether she's willing to travel out of your area or whether she's committed to living at home for now. As you can imagine, the all-around best way to learn a language is to go to the country where the language is spoken, and there are certainly many opportunities in this regard if Abi is interested. She might want to look at Aaron Falbel's piece in GWS #59 about learning Danish to get a sense of how one can learn a language in a community of native speakers as opposed to in a classroom. I suspect this way of learning would appeal to her.

Now, if traveling out of the country is not possible or not what Abi feels ready to do, the next question is, how could she gain access to a similar community of native speakers, right here? That becomes an interesting challenge to think about. I bet she could arrange for one-on-one meetings with a native speaker of a language that interests her fairly easily, even right in your area. She could advertise locally that she's looking for a chance to have French (or whatever) conversation, and she could offer something in return — maybe English, maybe one of her other skills. The only drawback to one-on-one conversation, and this may be a fairly big drawback, is that one misses the chance to hear native speakers talking back and forth with each other, and in my experience that can be very valuable. If you think of how a baby learns language, you realize that the baby has many opportunities to hear people talking among themselves, and to absorb the rhythm, sounds, and gradually the grammar of the language, even before he or she tries or is expected to speak. Also, it's often easier to pick up a language while you're doing something concrete, rather than just sitting and talking. If you're doing something together, there's more of a context in which to pick up what words mean.

So, would there be a way for Abi to be among several native speakers, rather than just one? Well, maybe. She might have to be willing to travel slightly outside your area, I don't know. Suppose she volunteered in Spanish-speaking parts of this country, maybe even doing some other kind of service that wasn't directly related to language but that put her in contact with Spanish speakers. That might be a wonderful way to work this. And of course with some investigation you could probably find opportunities with other languages, too. (I don't know which ones particularly interest her.) There's a large Russian immigrant community in this area, for example. Many parts of the country have large immigrant communities of various kinds — Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Greek, to name just a few. If Abi framed her question, "How might I volunteer in one of these communities and thereby come in contact with native speakers?" she might find herself with opportunities that wouldn't have crossed her mind if she'd been thinking only in terms of, "How do I study a language?" ...

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Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since our last issue was published. Our complete 1993 Directory was published in GWS #90, and GWS #93 has all the additions and changes that came in between then and now. Our Directory is *not* a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a (H), the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

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CO — Kevin & Janet RHODES (Darcy/86, Hilary/88, Gillian/90) 736 Eudora St, Denver 80220

CT — Joan MIKALSON (Daniel/81, Henry/83) PO Box 77, Storrs 06268 **(H)**

FL — Jane BROWN & Matt WILLIG (Perry/84, Jesse/91) 6812 SW 63 Av, Miami 33143 **(H)**

IL — Gary & Beverly ADAMS (Jay/79, Joe/87, Sarah/89) 2560A Cumberland Rd, Scott AFB 62225 •• Quinn & Cathy CRAWFORD (Madeleine/86, Patrick/88, William/90) 2365 High Pt Dr, Lindenhurst 60046 •• Heather & Ron FISHER (Chris/85, Tim/86) 218 Richards, Geneva 60134 (change) •• Michael GOCEK & Deborah CUNEFARE (Ted/78, Melissa/84, Patrick & Sarah/92) 507 Bnerhill Dr, Round Lake Park 60073-3041 (change) •• Linda & Eric TURNROTH (Jonathan/80, Molly/86) 3000 Middle Dr, Rock Falls 61071 (change)

IN — Anselma & Matthew ASHLEY (John/89) 712 Peashway St, South Bend 46617 (change)

KS — Beth Anne MANSUR & Richard HECKLER (Rose/83, Taj/86) 1217 Prospect Av, Lawrence 66044 **(H)**

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MI — Tim & Fran BURKE (Amie/77, Can/80, Kathryn/82, Flip/93) Benzie Home Educators, PO Box 208, Benzonia 49616 **(H)**

MN — Pat & Sue McGOUGH (Zachary/88, Katie/90, Dane/92) 2444 N St Albans, Roseville 55113

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NE — Dick & Rose YONEKURA (Josh/74, Abi/77, Tessa/80, Darcy/83) LEARN, 7741 E Avon, Lincoln 68505

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NC — James & Tracey VACCARELLA (Jon Taj/86, Collin/90) 2713 Kittrell Dr, Raleigh 27608 **(H)**

OH — Chris & Mary MURPHY (Ryan/84, Kyle/86, Kate/92) Alternative Learning Network, 1144 Koons Rd, N Canton 44720 •• Heidi SCHNITZER (Gretal/86) National Home Education Assoc, 5900 Som Center Rd Suite 156, Willoughby 44094

OR — Sarah PATTEE & Stuart HENIGSON (Harley/88, Emma/90) 476 Buckhorn Rd, Ashland 97520 **(H)**

TX — Pamela HENSLEY (Ross/81, Katie/83) 8306 Terrace Wind Ln, Houston 77040 •• Jeanne & Marty LOMAN (Emmaline/89, Sarah Pearl/92) 1110 Indian Autumn Trace, Houston 77062 **(H)**

WA — Lori & Jack LORANGER (Amber/84, BreAna/88) MPO 17-R Krogstad Rd, Washougal 98671-9623

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WY — Genie BOWERS & Paul STONE (Daniel/85, Susanna/89) PO Box 6072, Sheridan 82801

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Groups to add to the Directory of Organizations:

CA — Riverside Area Home Learners, c/o Gibson, 13171 Spur Branch Cir, Corona 91719; 909-245-0902

MI — Benzie Home Educators, PO Box 208, Benzonia 49616

OH — Alternative Learning Network, 1144 Koons Rd, N Canton 44720

WI — Unschooling Families, 1908 N Clark St, Appleton 54911; 414-735-9832

Address Changes:

KS — Teaching Parents Assoc (formerly Wichita Teaching Parents), PO Box 3968, Wichita 67201; 316-945-0810

NE — LEARN, (new phone no. only) 7741 E Avon, Lincoln 68505; 402-488-7741

TN —Tennessee Homeschooling Families, 214 Park Ln, Oliver Springs 37840

Outside of US — Homeschoolers Australia, PO Box 420, Kellyville 2153, NSW Australia

Certified Teachers: George Hecht, 4 High Ledge Av, Wellesley MA 02181; 617-235-4246 ••• Louann Rebbin-Shaw, 4412 Osborn Rd, Medway OH 45341; 513-873-8124

Resource People:

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Single Parents, Custody Disputes, Gay and/or Lesbian families: Debbie Driscoll, 14503 SE 114th Pl, Renton WA 98059. (Debbie says she's especially interested in hearing from parents who have been forced to put children in school during, or as a result of, divorce proceedings)

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Homeschooling in a culture where most kids go to school is very different from homeschooling in a culture where that is the usual course. As it is now, kids who homeschool still have to deal with school in one way or another — maybe they have friends who go to school, or they see school dominate young people's lives in movies and books, or they have to take standardized tests or keep records that divide their learning into school subjects. All of this makes homeschoolers aware of school's values — what kids in school are supposed to be learning, how school measures success and failure, what kind of social life is expected. In one way or another, homeschoolers have to figure out how they will stand in relation to these values: will they try to ignore them as much as possible (which is still a choice and sometimes an effort)? Will they worry about how they measure up or fit in according to school's standards? Will those worries affect what they do as homeschoolers?

I think all homeschoolers have to think about these issues at some point in their lives, to varying degrees and perhaps not always fully consciously. Some may return to these questions more often than others. While some may make peace fairly early on with the fact that their approach to learning and socializing doesn't match school's approach, others rethink this frequently, and reevaluate it at various stages of their lives, sometimes by experimenting with new approaches to homeschooling and sometimes by experimenting with school itself.

For this issue's Focus, we interviewed five long-time homeschoolers who had tried school for a short time and had then gone back to homeschooling. We interviewed kids who had had this particular pattern — out, in, and out again — because of how that pattern speaks to the issues I've just described. I know that other homeschoolers take other paths — some were in school, left, and never went back; some were homeschooled, tried school, and liked it enough to stay in. We've had stories about both these paths in GWS before, and we will again, because they too are interesting. But kids who have tried school and then left again are apt to have a particular perspective on how homeschoolers come to terms with the fact of school in our culture. They can talk about why homeschoolers sometimes have the impulse to go to school *and* about how they can use that experience to bring a new understanding back to homeschooling. No one else can really decide *for* homeschoolers how much they will care about, or change their activities according to, school's standards and values. But perhaps these interviews will stimulate the thinking of others wrestling with such issues.

— Susannah Sheffer

Office News & Announcements

New Staff Members

[SS:] We welcome Manoj Padki as shipping manager, and Howard Webster as assistant order processor. Manoj first read John Holt's books when he was living in India ten years ago. When he came to Boston three years ago and discovered that Holt Associates was nearby, he visited the office and then helped out at our conference. Now he brings a lot of skill and enthusiasm to the shipping job.

Howard considers himself a homeschooling father, though his son is just 4. He has been reading GWS for several years, and we are already very grateful for the way he has helped us process our high volume of orders. With both these new colleagues on board, we are well set for the busy fall season.

Inquiries from Abroad

We've had a lot of inquiries from abroad lately. In the past year we've had requests for translation rights for John Holt's *How Children Fail* and *How Children Learn* from Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary. Also, a professor at Eotvos Lorand University in Budapest wrote to us for information about John Holt so he could include John in his international and Hungarian *Who's Who* and write an article about John as "one of the 10-15 most influential specialists in education from all over the world."

From India, we've received four different requests for translation rights and information about GWS. This is quite a challenge given the linguistic diversity of India, but Manoj will help us navigate these waters, and we look forward to seeing Hindi and Marathi editions of *Fail* and *Learn*, and maybe of GWS as well, in 1994.

Then, a Catholic missionary in Tanzania found a copy of *Escape from Childhood* in his mission, read it, and has been corresponding with Pat Farenga about ways to learn languages from children and about how homeschooling might be used to help native people in lieu of schooling. Meanwhile, Day Farenga spoke on the phone with long-time subscriber Reverend Tom Peace and his family. The Peaces are based on the Amazon river, and their homeschooled boys are now taking college-level correspondence courses. They told Day that several of our catalog items have been useful to them: they used The Learnables to teach English, and also ordered quantities of just the Learnables book (which has only pictures, no words) and created their own Portuguese tapes, similar to those The Learnables produces. They have used these tapes to help Brazilian natives learn Portuguese, Brazil's most common language. The Peaces also used the pianica (which we used to sell) and *Mrs. Stewart's Piano Lessons* to teach western music.

Finally, I got a call from Margaret Coleman of the Russian American Cultural Center here in Boston. Margaret is in touch with a homeschooling family in Russia, and this family is eager for information and materials. I met with Margaret to talk about how we might provide information and support, and we ended up discussing the possibility of my making a trip to Russia next June to meet this family and others interested in homeschooling and our ideas about how children learn. I'll keep you posted on whether this trip materializes! In the meantime, we hope to have stories from the Russian homeschoolers in an upcoming issue of GWS.

Mailing our materials overseas has always been complicated and costly. One way we hope to get around this problem is to create foreign branches of our bookstore. Our long-time supporter and friend, Jo-Anne Beirne, has been working with us for about a year to set up a branch in Australia, which we hope will open in 1994.

Selected Back Issues

Since we mentioned in the last issue that we would be happy to select back issues on specific topics for people who had a particular interest or concern, we've had several such requests. Readers have asked us to select back issues with material on nontraditional ways of learning math, single parents, only children, college admissions for homeschoolers, going from school to homeschooling, custody disputes, and young children's learning. If you are looking for back issues with material on specific topics, just write or call and let us know how many you would like to order. Back issues are available to subscribers for $2 each plus $2 per order.

1994 Directory

Our complete 1994 Directory will be published in our next issue, #96. The deadline for new entries or address changes is October 31st, so if you need to send in a form, do it as soon as you get this issue. If you've sent us small changes to your listing - adding new babies, correcting spelling, etc. - throughout the year, we've been holding on to them and will list them in the complete directory, so you don't need to send that information in again.

New Resource List Category

In the following issue [illegible] we print our complete lists of certified teachers, lawyers, professors, psychologists, school districts, and people with experience in various subjects. Now is a good time to send us a new listing, or to check your listing as it appeared last time (in #91, or in a subsequent update) and see if you need to change anything.

North Carolina reader Jocelyn Butler suggests that we add a new category to the lists of resource people: homeschoolers who are in college (or headed there) and are interested in meeting GWS readers near their new locations. Jocelyn writes, "The college students would gain a homeschooling family nearby whom they could visit on weekends or whenever, and the host families might in exchange find not only a role model/mentor for their older kids but also a source of inside info on life after homeschooling as found at their local college. The college students could offer tours of their campus for local or even visiting homeschool families."

We're happy to start this list, so send us your name and address at college if you'd like to be on it (or parents, send us your kids' names, with their permission of course). In keeping with our interest in letting people know that college is not the *only* option, we'd like to include on this list grown homeschoolers who are now living away from home and working or doing an apprenticeship or whatever it may be. The same benefits that Jocelyn mentions would likely apply in these cases, too - the young person would have a welcoming family to visit, and the family would get to meet a grown-up homeschooler who could give younger children a sense of future options.

We'd Like to Hear...

Massachusetts reader Daphne Slocombe writes that she would like to see letters in GWS about "the nitty-gritty of how people arrange their lives financially to afford to have one parent home to homeschool. What decisions and changes do people make in order to be able to homeschool?" We would love to hear stories about this too.

We are also interested in hearing from parents of young children - those that the rest of society calls preschoolers. If you have young children and are planning to homeschool, or consider yourselves homeschoolers already, how does that affect your decisions or activities now? Do you make any efforts, now, toward setting the stage for official homeschooling later on? So many parents who are planning to send their kids to school seem to do things that could be classified as preparation for school. Do you find yourselves making other kinds of choices or doing other kinds of things, based on your intention *not* to send your child to school?

Julie Scandora (WA) writes: "I want to add to Susannah's words in GWS #94 about continuing to subscribe to GWS after children are grown or whatever. Besides continuing to support GWS for financial reasons, one should consider the emotional side as well. If my limited experience with homeschooling groups is indicative of the whole, there are many new homeschoolers who are unsure of their choice.

"Those who have been through this or already feel sure of themselves may not have much to gain from reading GWS. But they have much to contribute in writing to GWS. Their experiences and ideas will help those less experienced or less confident. Nothing is as inspiring as learning of others who have been this way before and have succeeded."

News & Reports

German Legal Update

In GWS #89, we printed parts of the European Commission on Human Rights's decision against German homeschooling mother Renata Leuffen. A year later, Renata writes from London:

On July 1, 1993 the four judges within the European Commission on Human Rights refused to accept my second application. The judges did not consider our exile, that we lost all our possessions back in Germany, that the German youth welfare department took away all my parental rights and even asked Interpol London for deportation of the child - and, amazingly, they ignored the Londoner Education Services' approval and support of Danny's home education. The Londoner Education Services had appealed with a telefax to the president of the Commission in absolute favor of this application.

Because we were unable to find a German lawyer, the judges insisted that the innerstate legal way had not been exhausted and they said that no new evidence had been brought up. Mr. Marcetus, secretary of the Commission, suggested that I open a new legal case before the first administrative court in Duesseldorf, demanding that the court rulings be reversed because the child is now living in England. I will appeal for this and I may have to go before the German Supreme Court one more time.

The judges within the Council of Europe think that the present European Human Rights Convention does not clearly protect the right of home education and that an amendment is necessary to achieve this goal.

In September, the German publisher *Kinderinformationsdienst*, in Bonn, will publish a booklet I've written on home education, and I am receiving support from a bureau for educational freedom in Nuernberg. The two UNO-organizations in Geneva, OIDEL and PRODEFA, may decide to bring this case before the UNO Human Rights Organizations.

Danny, who is now 9, must not reenter Germany until he is 18, however. Any attempt to enter Germany would put him in danger of being confined to a German home, the children's help center in Duesseldorf. The German authorities may well try another deportation request. But in this case, an English court would have to decide, and no English judge is willing to rule a verdict against home education.

I have decided to continue this battle, which is now going into its fifth year. I can be reached in England at 12 A Willington Rd, London N22 6SB, and donations in English pounds are most welcome under Abbey National plc, Wood Green, London N22 6YH, bank code 00050005, Sort code 09-00-00, account number X8139597LEU.

Homeschoolers and Driver's Insurance

Lee Ross wrote in the August 1993 issue of the West Virginia Home Educators newsletter:

Our daughter, Hannah, turned 15 in May and we started thinking about getting her driver's permit and eventually her license. We were curious to know how much our car insurance premium would go up when she started driving, and if taking driver's ed would lower the cost.

Our insurance agent said that driver's ed would lower the cost a little, but that the biggest discount was for honor students who maintained a "B" average or above in all subjects. "But our kids don't get any grades," we told him, and we asked how we could qualify for this discount. Our agent checked on it and called us back a day or so later to say that only accredited school grades could be used to obtain the "honor student discount."

That bothered us. If Hannah were in school, we are almost certain that she would be an honor student.

We called the insurance company headquarters a month or so later to inquire for ourselves. We found that if Hannah took driver's ed and was an honor student our insurance rates would actually decrease; with driver's ed only, our rates would increase considerably. We asked if there was some standard for homeschoolers to obtain the "honor student discount" and suggested that if there wasn't it seemed that homeschooled honor students were being discriminated against. The woman with whom we spoke could not answer our question, so she referred us to the company underwriters.

The chief underwriter was a very nice person and very open-minded toward homeschoolers. We suggested that, in the case of homeschoolers, CTBS or other standard skills test scores could be substituted for grades, or perhaps even references from private instructors for piano, violin, voice, or other lessons could be used to determine a student's diligence. He agreed to this in our case.

As a result of our conversation, come next May when Hannah gets her driver's license, our insurance rates will go down.

[SS:] We'd be interested to hear if this has come up in other states. Homeschooling mother Esther Lillemoe wrote in the Georgians for Freedom in Education newsletter that when she asked her insurance company if her daughter could qualify for their "Good Student Discount," they said, "Sure, why not?" Esther sent copies of her daughter's Iowa Test of Basic Skills and SAT scores, and a letter describing why she considered her daughter a good student, and she got the discount.

As with the issue of dropouts being denied driver's licenses, which GWS readers wrote about in issues #72 and #73, it's good to know that homeschoolers can get around restrictive laws or requirements when they do exist. But I'm pretty angry on behalf of all those West Virginian students with "C" averages who are given

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such an arbitrary penalty, *and* on behalf of the honor students who have yet another *external* motivation for doing well in school and thus less chance of tapping into their internal motivation for learning. These rules that link grade point averages with completely unrelated penalities or privileges don't really help anyone, and they only extend school's reach so that if you aren't succesful in that arena you are denied the opportunity to succeed anywhere else.

Publicizing Homeschooling

Penny Barker (OH) writes:

"Spreading the word" about homeschooling (GWS #91, #92) rather intrigues me since I've found it can be tricky. If you don't connect with a sympathetic ear, you can even raise the hackles of interviewers unknowingly - hackles the interviewers aren't even aware they possess.

I learned from watching and listening to my own children being interviewed. Homeschooling as such has never been the subject of the interview - it has always been in another area: music, mushing (traveling with a team of sled dogs), outdoor leadership, etc. If the kids initiate talk about their homeschooling in the interview (they don't often do this), the interviewer usually omits that part from the televised or published interview. But if it is simply mentioned in passing, it stays in.

On several occasions I think that the interviewers either did not feel comfortable with the homeschooling choice or they simply did not think it would be of interest to their particular audience.

Keeping all of this in mind, I recently wrote an article on Maggie, my second child, for an Alaskan magazine. I was careful to mention my children's educational background in a nonchalant, nonpointed manner as an integrated part of the focus which was Maggie's mushing. In this two-page article published in July, I mention homeschooling only twice: "Having never been to school, Barker is a self-educated person who learns from every person, every animal, every situation that she encounters." And later: "All five Barker children are self-educated at home and all are following their own dreams."

Even though I know from a few things the editor said in that issue's editorial that he may have reservations about homeschooling, I am pleased that nothing was cut from my article. I was also able to work into the bio-notes that I am a regular contributor to *Growing Without Schooling*, though they did delete mention of my past writing for *Home Education Magazine* - I think those words were just too blatant! Or maybe it was just a space problem.

The funny thing is that a schooled friend reading the article (she didn't know I'd written it because I did it under my maiden name) said that she really liked the article on Maggie but "didn't they mention her homeschooling an awful lot?" This assured me that my limited inclusion of homeschooling will be noticed by anyone interested in it. I feel that had I mentioned educational choices more, it would have been edited out or the entire article might have been rejected.

I think that if homeschooling is pushed (and this can be subtle), it is sometimes rejected, not for what it actually *is* but because the interviewer fears the homeschooling advocate is proselytizing. Actually, simply not mentioning school and proceeding to tell what goes on in one's life can be an indirect, nonthreatening expression of home-educating.

For example, right now I'm working on a "homeschooling novel," but it is really a novel (autobiographical in nature) that has homeschooling and the home-educating lifestyle woven *into* it - not blatantly presented for people to accept or reject but instead woven (I hope rather beautifully) into the whole piece of cloth that represents a homeschooler's life.

How to Find Out About Laws & Regulations

Here are some ways you can find out the legal situation in your state.

1) Look up the law yourself, in a public library or law library (courthouse, law school, etc.) Laws are indexed; try "school attendance" or "education, compulsory." Many states have revised their home education laws since 1982 so check the recent statute changes. We have printed or summarized these new laws in our back issues.

2) Ask the state department of education for any laws or regulations pertaining to homeschooling and/or starting a private school. In some states (particularly CA, IL, IN, KY) there are few regulations concerning private schools and so you can call your home a school.

3) Contact state or local homeschooling groups. This list was last printed in GWS #90, and is updated regularly and sold separately for $4 as part of our "Homeschooling Resource List." Changes to the list are also printed at the back of each issue of GWS. Some state groups have prepared handbooks or guidelines on legal matters. Often, these groups can tell you more about the legal climate in a state than anyone else can - whether new legislation is pending, for example, and how the present law is being enforced.

4) Contact other families listed in our Directory. This is particularly useful if you live in a state that leaves homeschooling decisions up to individual school districts. When you contact these families, help them by having done some research on your own first.

5) In general, it is *not* wise to start by asking your local school district; they usually don't know the law either. Better to gather the facts first on your own.

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John Holt on Teachers and Learners

John Holt kept a file called "Teachers/ Learners," in which he put material for a possible book on how real teaching and learning happen. He never had time to develop this very far, but a few notes he made are worth quoting here:

Knowledge:

Let us imagine what has in fact happened countless times. A human being is doing something - using a tool or tools, playing a musical instrument or game, throwing a ball or net or spear, doing a dance, painting a picture, singing a song, making something of wood or stone or fiber. Another human being is watching. He does not know how to do what the other can do, but he wants to learn. He watches carefully. Soon he tries to do the same thing. Perhaps, though he may not, the other watches him. Perhaps, though he may not, he points out the difference between his own performance and the novice's imitation. In time the novice learns to do the task as well as the other.

Of this we say that the novice has "acquired" the knowledge or skill of the expert, or that the expert has "passed on" or "transmitted" his knowledge or skill to the novice. The image is of something *outside* the two men, that the expert has while the other does not, and that the expert gives, hands to the other, as he might give a stick or rock, and that the other takes from him. But the image is false. There was not and is not something outside the two men, that one man "had" and then "gave" to the other. The knowledge or skill was always and altogether *in* the men. We could perhaps say that the novice, at first without this knowledge or skill, as he watched and imitated the other *grew* this knowledge and skill within himself as we might, if we could, grow another tooth. At one time my hands could not work the keys of a typewriter. Now they can. But I have not taken something that was outside myself, the skill of typing, and put it into myself, as I might eat a piece of bread. I have grown the skill. I have not taken it into myself, but produced it from within myself, as a spider does not find, but spins, a web.

Biology:

I was talking to a student the other day. She said that she had gone to a school in England that was very old fashioned, where she had taken a very strict, organized, teacher-controlled course in biology. She went on to say that she was glad about this, because now she had a foundation, a beginning, which would enable her to learn anything else she wanted to know about biology. She was in a mood for an argument, and I was not, so I let the conversation move in other directions. But I thought about what she said for some time, and thought of things I might say if we were ever to talk again.

I know a great many things about biology that I am almost sure she does not know and that I suspect some of her teachers, at least, do not know. Furthermore, I do not know many of the things that she learned in school, so my knowledge of biology, of living things, does not rest on the foundation she and her teachers think is essential. Furthermore, I did not learn these things in biology books or biology courses or from biologists. I did not even learn them in the process of trying to learn something about a "subject" called Biology. I learned them in the course of a great deal of miscellaneous reading, some of it in books, much of it in newspapers and magazines, about a whole range of social, political, and economic issues that concern me.

Biology is a way of looking at and thinking about certain parts of the unified whole of existence and experience. It is not a ladder that must be ascended step by step, or a long corridor or path, in which you must begin at the beginning before you can go anywhere. It is a territory, which one can enter, and then explore, in an infinite number of ways. My point of entry, back in 1947 - I had never studied biology in school - was my concern for what was then called Conservation and is now more broadly understood and named as Ecology. More particularly, it was a book called *Road to Survival*, by William Vogt.

... What this young woman has probably learned from her schooling is to be school and teacher dependent, that for anything you might want to learn there are other things you must learn first, and that other people will tell you what they are, that biology like everything else is a ladder or path and that others who have been down the path must guide you down it, that biology is what biology teachers and biologists say it is, that what is important is what they say is important, and that what they don't talk about isn't worth knowing. And furthermore, that if she wants to learn anything about any other aspect of reality and experience, she must follow the same procedure: find a school, and get a teacher to tell her what she has to learn first before she can learn anything else.

Furthermore, she has probably learned to be scornful or contemptuous of other modes of learning, or of people who learn in other ways, or of things learned in other ways. My knowledge of the nature of living things, and the relationships of living things, she might well dismiss as unimportant, not real, not true biology, because it wasn't in the course.

Writing to School Officials

When state laws require that homeschooling families submit proposals or plans to their local school districts, families must learn the art of putting homeschooling activities into the language of the schools. Below are excerpts from one family's proposal.

[SS:] These are excerpts from the proposal that Phoebe Wells and Tadek Gaj (MA) wrote for this year. Some things to note: even though the law suggests that homeschooling only begins at age 6, parents don't have to write as though they have done nothing up until that time. Many of the homeschooling proposals for 6 year olds that we have seen over the years have emphasized what the child has already done. This shows that the homeschooling family is already competent and successful, and also keeps you from having to be locked in to specific plans for the coming year.

Also, even when children are not yet reading, you can stress the books which you've read to them and also discuss what steps they are taking toward independent reading. Even if these steps are very preliminary, you can still make it clear that you recognize and support them. Similarly, if a child writes a letter or story by dictating it, that counts, too.

We, the parents of Eoin Gaj, have decided to retain full responsibility for Eoin's education. As he has grown older (Eoin turned 6 in April, 1993), it has become increasingly apparent to us that Eoin learns best in situations where he can totally immerse himself in a topic, study all its various aspects from many different angles, lead his own pursuit of knowledge primarily by seeking answers to a multitude of questions, and incorporate what he has learned into both special and everyday activities. We have found that interrupting this process frustrates and ultimately confuses him when we have attempted to teach Eoin a fact or skill out of context or before he was ready. When Eoin is permitted to follow his interests, we have discovered that he not only learns rapidly and comprehensively, but he also experiences the joy of having successfully mastered a subject area himself. Because of Eoin's intellectual learning style and his emotional make-up, we strongly believe homeschooling to be the best form of education for him.

Having familiarized ourselves with both the Massachusetts court decisions pertaining to homeschooling (Perchemlides v. Frizzle, 1978 and In Re Charles, 1987) and the Massachusetts Memo for school officials from the State Department of Education (1987), we recognize and respect your concern that Eoin be educated so as to prevent him from eventually becoming a burden on the State. Therefore we present you here with our backgrounds, descriptions of Eoin's past and current educational pursuits (including resources utilized), our proposal for topics and activities we expect to cover over the coming year (again including probable resources) and our means of evaluating Eoin's progress.

[from the section, "Eoin's Educational Progress to Date":]

The following description of what Eoin has studied in this past year's homeschooling is divided by subject area, although in truth this is not how we approach the subjects. As stated before, Eoin excels at immersion learning. Consequently, Eoin typically reads a lot about a topic, composes his own stories about it, figures out any mathematical aspects, locates the topic in time and space historically and geographically, researches biographies of prominent people involved, and explores any other cultural specifics involved, such as indigenous music, art, games, architecture, etc. Thus, our homeschooling is interdisciplinary, and we do focus on multicultural and environmental issues. Also we do encourage Eoin to use his imagination first in approaching subjects, and we concentrate on technique-training second. We value Eoin's creativity in all subjects highly.

Language Arts:

Eoin's study of language arts is literature-based. Books are extremely important to Eoin. We read to him for at least one hour each day and visit the library at least once each week for story hours, bringing home ten or more books each time. ...

Eoin's comprehension is quite good. He chooses to discuss almost every book in great detail, and loves to ponder over why the characters did certain acts and what would have happened otherwise. Eoin's insightful comments and questions have been remarked on by many people such as librarians. A sampling of the books we have read this year is at the end of this section. ...

Over the past year Eoin has taken several steps toward independent reading. He can identify most letters with their most common sounds. In addition, he can read a few words by sight. Recently he has begun to utilize these skills when reading something he has memorized, as a self-check. For example, when he forgot what type of vehicle was pictured on the "V" page of an ABC book, he knew it could not be a car, truck, or bus because they began with the wrong sound. He quickly recognized "van" as the correct word. Likewise he corrected himself on the "S" page from "hot dogs" to "sausages." Eoin has begun asking for reading assistance more frequently, and phonics appear to help him the most.

As for writing, Eoin has been composing original stories since he was three. He is very kinesthetic when he works out his stories, usually running back and forth across a room and pausing only when he

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wants to change something. Often he acts out his stories as he is composing. ...

Mathematics:

Eoin has always been intrigued by numbers. He can count reliably to 49 and can comfortably perform arithmetic functions with numbers up to 19. Rather than rely on his fingers or other manipulatives, Eoin prefers to compute mentally. He has experimented with our calculator, but still derives far more satisfaction from working out solutions in his head. He is able to add two and even three numbers less than 10 with ease. His favorite operation is division. For example, he was forever divvying up the number of braves at Custer's Last Stand among the various Sioux and Cheyenne chiefs and soldiers for each of Custer's officers. He clearly understands from real-life examples that division problems do not always work out evenly, and he checks his solutions by adding up the numbers in each group plus any remainder. We have explained multiplication as an alternate method to check his division, but he strongly prefers his repeated additions. He can compute subtraction problems, but he does not enjoy them as much as division and addition.

Eoin clearly recognizes math as an integral part of life and is very pleased when he can understand something "adult" because of his ability with numbers. Eoin is independent in most of his purchases and comprehends the value of money. In card games Eoin easily performs the "more than" and "less than" to keep score in War. He also likes to sort his deck of cards into various sets, i.e. all the jacks or fours, all the red cards, all the clubs, etc. Eoin loves measurement, especially his metal tape measure, and he has measured and compared the dimensions of many objects in inches, feet, and centimeters. Cooking is always a favorite activity, and those measuring skills are quite good. Eoin's grasp of other measurements is improving as well, such as temperature and distance. Recently Eoin has been exploring geometry, mainly with mosaic blocks, tangrams, and simple origami. ...

[The report then discusses History and Social Studies, Sciences, Physical Education, Languages, Art, and Music.]

Future Study:

As it is not our plan to impose a rigid structure on Eoin's education, it is difficult to predict with complete accuracy exactly what Eoin will study and accomplish next year. However, since we do work so closely with Eoin we do have a good sense of the direction his interests will take. Because Eoin learns subjects that fascinate him, we expect his future studies to extend and expand on what he has already done. We have also made additional plans for new topics to pursue and projects to complete. We are prepared to act as resources for Eoin, providing him with books, supplies, experts, guidance, feedback, and encouragement. In addition we will be sure to introduce him to any other first grade level activities he might not initiate himself. ...

[The report then gives fairly brief descriptions of what Eoin is likely to do in each subject area, or what he has said he wants to do.]

Evaluation:

Our round-the-clock contact with Eoin precludes the need for formal evaluative methods. Our daily ongoing conversations about what he is studying are in reality a form of continuous and immediate assessment. As Eoin's style is to question someone until he understands each detail, what he asks is a clear indication of his comprehension level. Also, Eoin's practice of creating and telling stories based on the information he's acquired provides good opportunity to observe how he has assimilated his knowledge. Thus evaluation is a seamless process for us.

As we have done in this letter, we would be happy to summarize each year's studies and accomplishments and deliver it at a date convenient for you. At that time we will also list for you our goals and plans for the upcoming year. ...

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Volunteer Experiences

Veterinarian's Office

From Chrissy Biskner of Michigan:

I'm 15, and I've always wanted to work with animals. We know the local veterinarian really well because we're always taking our animals there, so a few weeks ago my mother and I went and asked if I could volunteer. He had other students volunteering already, so he said, "OK, just talk to my wife," because his wife handles all the scheduling. He didn't have a problem with the fact that I was homeschooled - in fact, he homeschooled his kids for one year. He said it was great because I'd be able to work during the day.

Now they call me in whenever they need help and have space for me (other kids work there, but not at the same time as me). I've gone three times so far. I clean out the animals' cages and feed them, and I do a little bit of paperwork - just the easy stuff. The vet lets me watch surgery, too, which is really interesting.

Most of the work was how I expected it would be, because I've read a lot about animals and about veterinary work. I had to learn some things, like how to transfer animals to different cages and how to handle big dogs so they won't bite. Everybody shares the work, and I'm glad I'm allowed to do important things.

Rehab Institute, Opera House

Whitney Lyon of Georgia writes:

When I was 14, I started volunteering at the Roosevelt Institute for Rehabilitation in Warm Springs, Georgia. At the time, there wasn't a teen volunteer program established. I guess you could say I founded the program! I had the desire to work at RWSIR after attending therapy sessions there with my mother and helping with the needs of others in my mother's therapy group. My mother approached the volunteer coordinator, Mrs. Emily Motley, and said she would like to volunteer but only if I could volunteer also. Mrs. Motley had wanted to get a program started for Volun-Teens (persons under 18) and this was a golden opportunity. She and my mother agreed that my mother would volunteer as long as I could, also.

I first worked in the volunteer office, on the hospital wards, and in the medical library. After I had been there a couple of months, Emily and the rest of the volunteers opened the Spirit of Warm Springs Gift Shop, which was run by volunteers. My mother and I helped a lot of people, which is what I consider volunteering to be. I worked in the gift shop restocking, cashiering, clerking, pricing items, and making welcome bags for new patients. The volunteers were mostly older ladies so it was unusual to have a teenager there. I worked well and hard and came to be accepted by most of them. I had to prove to some of them that I could work as long and produce as well as they did.

The same month that the gift shop opened, my mother and I received a Certificate of Appreciation from RWSIR, which meant a lot to us both. During the following year, Mrs. Motley left RWSIR and her replacement was not as enthusiastic about the Volun-Teen program. A parting of the ways occurred the next fall and my work for that year was not recognized.

Late last summer, I helped my mother with fundraising for a new public library. We constructed projects to be sold at a crafts fair. Proceeds would go for books and library supplies. I was the first young person involved in this work. As time has progressed, more teens have gotten involved with this continuing activity.

Currently I am volunteering at the Springer Opera House. The homeschool group I belong to went on a field trip to the opera house last fall. Part of that trip was a hands-on experience in what makes a production happen. I enjoyed what I did that day, and kept going back. Members of my family participated also. No experience was required for the set design and construction work. People of all ages volunteer there. Teenagers and families and professional set-builders work side by side. There are opportunities for acting and theatrical participation as well.

I have loved my volunteer work, both what I am doing now and what I have done in the past. I have met some very helpful and understanding people and I wouldn't give it up for anything. I encourage teenagers to take part in some kind of volunteer work because it helps you to feel good about yourself. I feel good about the way people involved in the various projects have responded to me. I also like the feeling of accomplishment I get when something I have helped to create becomes part of a production or fundraiser or is pleasing to patients and other workers.

Historical House, Retail Store, Inner-City School

From Emily Bergson-Shilcock (PA):

I've had several volunteer jobs over the past few years. When I was 12, my violin quintet played at a nearby historical house. The guides were all dressed up, and it looked neat - I've always liked that kind of stuff. When I was looking around, I saw that they had a camp in the summer. We got information about it, and that summer I ended up going to the camp with a friend. It was just once a week throughout the summer, which I liked better than a full-time camp. We'd do a craft every day, and then when visitors came, we would give tours. I really liked that they trusted us enough to give the tours, and didn't just have the adults do it.

At the beginning we went for four days in a row so the guides could teach us about the history of the house. They taught us about the family who had lived there and about the things lying around the house - things that visitors would pick up and want to know about. Then they basically left us to do the tours, but if we had questions or didn't know the answer to a question that a visitor asked, we would just ask the adult guides. The visitors were very nice, and they didn't seem annoyed that kids were giving the tours.

The next year, when I was 13, I wanted some kind of job. We know a lot of the storeowners in our town because we homeschool and we often walk around during the day. We especially liked Janet, who runs a store called T-Shirt Tunnel, because she was very friendly, she wasn't pushy, and she accepted homeschooling. We suggested the idea of having me volunteer there, and we suggested trying it as a three-week experiment at first. She said that was fine, and it worked out really well. Since then it's really blossomed. At first, because I was only 13, I wasn't getting paid, but then I was doing a lot of work and even bringing stuff home to do, so Janet started giving me $5 each time. Then when I turned 14 she started paying me a regular wage, and now that I'm 15, I'm getting paid $5 an hour. I work there about four hours a week, and more around Christmastime

when she needs extra help. You need to be 16 to work the heat presses, which we use for putting transfers on T-shirts. I know how to use the presses, but I don't use them when customers are there because technically I'm not supposed to. So right now Janet can't leave me in the store alone, but when I turn 16 she'll be able to.

One of the best parts has been the way Janet has taken a lot of my suggestions and used them. When I first started, the store was just kind of staying where it was; it wasn't improving a lot. The signs were all hand-done, and the cardboard would fade from being in the windows. I took all those signs home and typed them up on the computer. Last Christmas we had coupon books, and that was my idea. Then I suggested that Janet put other stuff in the window so that people in the neighborhood would realize that she sold more than T-shirts. After that people would come in and say, "I never knew you sold anything besides T-shirts, and I've lived here for years!"

Working there is a really fun experience. Janet has a grandson who comes in sometimes, and last week we were very busy so I was holding him and running around. Janet's children sometimes come in to help, too. It's a family business, so it's a fun atmosphere.

This past year my mother, younger sister, and I have been volunteering at an elementary school in Philadelphia. My mom wanted us to see how different families lived - she wanted us to see the diversity of people around here. She saw in a church newsletter that they had volunteers go every Wednesday morning to this school to help the children. All the people who had gone before had been adults. When we went into the first grade classroom, we brought lots of interesting materials, because all the kids usually did was paperwork. They were only in first grade! The teacher had already decided who the dumb kids were, and they sat separately and weren't allowed to do some of the activites - like the teacher would say, "These kids can't plant bean plants today, they have to do their paperwork." The teacher was really very negative about the children.

The children really liked us. Every time we came in, they'd come running. The teacher took a while to warm up to us, but eventually she was very nice to us. She'd still yell and scream at the children, though. We'd bring in materials, and she'd say, "Well, what would they learn from that?" But you could tell they were learning. They'd start building something out of some material, and she'd say, "No, you're supposed to be doing *this* with it." But it wasn't like there was anything wrong with the children; they did just fine.

At the end of the year we put together books with the children. We interviewed each one of them, and we took their picture. We asked them a bunch of questions, like what were their favorite things to do in the summer and the winter, and what would they do to make the world a better place. It was sad to hear some of the answers, like to make the world a better place they'd get rid of all the junkies, and clean up their houses, and feed the poor people. We put their answers together in report covers and put their photos on the front, with their names, and the kids loved them so much. They kept running up to us and saying, "That's a picture of *me* on the front!" and "Will you read this to me again?" The teacher said, "You must have spent a fortune to do this," but we really didn't spend an exorbitant amount of money. Except for the photos, nothing really cost much. It was mostly just time, and thinking about it. On the last day, we took pictures of them with their books, and they were jumping up and down and holding their books in the air. So it was really nice to feel that we did that for them.

I've also done a pottery apprenticeship, although I'm not doing it anymore. A friend of our family loved pottery and was very good at it. She fixed up an old spring house on her property and made it into a studio, and then she invited me to come and work with her. I'd go once a week for about three hours. I'd mostly watch her, and then if I had a question I'd ask her. I really liked that, because sometimes when you're taking lessons, the teacher says, "Oh no, no, that's wrong." Nancy was very nice, and she always had new ideas. I'd get there and she'd be working on the wheel, and then I'd do my own work, and we'd talk while we worked. I really improved at pottery a lot more than I had while taking lessons at an art center near here, because with twelve children in the class, you can't expect the teacher to help everybody. Also, the teachers there would have one project and that was what you had to do. With Nancy, she'd say, "What would you *like* do to today?" and she'd give me options, and bring in books of different things I could do.

Most everything we do, we say, "Let's try it for three weeks first." It's easier for people to say yes that way. If you walk in to a store and say, "I'd like to volunteer here," and they've never had volunteers before, it's more likely that they'll say no. Just because they haven't had volunteers, that doesn't mean they can't, but it's easier for them to say yes to something short-term. Then if it works out, you can keep going. I guess a lot of people are used to not trusting children; they're used to them being a problem, instead of a help. When I started at T-Shirt Tunnel, Janet was very open to having me come, but she said, "What would you do?" That was just because she'd never had a volunteer before. I started out helping her stock shelves. Then I started using the cash register, because I have one in my bedroom and I've always loved working it. She had a couple of buttons on her cash register that she'd never used because she didn't know what they meant. I showed her what they meant, and then she was much more willing to show me things, like how to use the VISA machine. In a lot of ways it's easier to go into a smaller business, and easier if you already know and like the people.

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Challenges & Concerns

Custody Dispute

Sandra Mangus of Idaho writes:

We've gone through a lot of pain as a family. Last October, I received a legal complaint from our oldest son's biological father charging me with educational and socialization neglect (due to home educating our son) in order to get custody. A hearing was held in December and a home study and testing was ordered. Jason, our son, tested poorly, except for science. My husband challenged the test. Jason was retested on reading (they refused to do any other assessment). Three weeks later his score was over two grade levels higher than it had been, but still one grade level below his age.

About two months later, I had an educational psychologist test him and he tested above grade level on two academic tests for reading and math, but below in spelling. He has difficulty with writing (he reverses letters sometimes and misspells many words) and is a slow reader. I had read to him from a wide variety of materials, used different approaches in encouraging his learning, and he has learned many things on his own. He had lessons on many subjects and read daily. I've used literature, texts, workbooks, field trips, etc. We listen to public radio (but don't watch TV), especially the news. Anyway, his father, who has had very little contact with him, won custody through the court. The decision was given to us on June 18th.

We miss Jason terribly. Jason told the judge and attorneys more than once that he didn't want to live with his father. At the time of the decision, he was about to turn 12.

We have a low income, but now we're in debt more than ever from legal and related expenses. Jason's father and stepmother earn over $50,000 per year which is a great deal more than we earn.

My husband and I are appealing this decision. I told the judge I would like to continue home-educating Jason (even with yearly testing and a packaged curriculum), but we would put him in a private school if ordered. I've been committed to home education since before Jason's birth, but have worked outside the home during portions of his earlier life.

Jason's father is a social worker and is gone all day while Jason stays home alone. Jason knows no one in that area who is supportive of homeschooling or of him. He doesn't trust his father since he wouldn't listen to him the many times he told him he didn't want to live there. His father will enroll him in a large public school in the fall.

If anyone can help us financially, legally, and/or emotionally, we would greatly appreciate it. I would like to hear from anyone who has had a similar experience with the courts.

Memories of a Dropout

Jamie Moore of California writes:

I was a high school dropout, not because I was pregnant but because I was bored. I was the teacher's pet up until junior high. I got real tired of being made fun of, so I started being bad. I was a very rebellious teenager.

I never planned on quitting school. I started high school in 1985. The first day I was there I discovered how easy it was to cut classes. I liked two classes, drama and business math, so I didn't skip either of those. I did very well in them. But the rest of my classes were so boring. It was so much more fun to hang out in the smoking section with all my friends and smoke cigarettes and discuss life. Eventually all my friends started getting kicked out and sent to continuation school.

Continuation school sounded so much better - only four hours a day. So my sophomore year, I went, too. It was even more boring than the regular high school! Just packets of worksheets. So then I got on independent study - still packets of worksheets but at least I only had to go to the bus one day a week.

While I was on independent study, I met my husband. I was 15, he was 17. After we fell in love, nothing else seemed to matter.

We're taking our GED this fall. I wish I had chosen to homeschool. I think I would have felt so much better about myself. I learned a lot after I quit school, though. I got my first job when I was 15. I worked in a fast food restaurant on and off for three years. When I wasn't working, I was the main caregiver for my younger sisters. I learned a lot about raising kids from taking care of my baby sisters. I made all my mistakes on them - I'm doing much better with my own kids.

My husband, Tom, started learning a lot also after he dropped out of school. When he was 17 he went to work in another town. He stayed in a little trailer, and he had to do all of his own grocery shopping as well as manage his own money. Plus, he worked during the day as a carpenter's apprentice and at night as a night watchman.

Tom is a construction plumber now. I'm just a plain, old-fashioned housewife. I plan to homeschool my two kids. Kevin is 4. People keep saying, "He'll be starting school pretty soon." They don't think a high school dropout is capable of teaching her own children. But my husband always says, school didn't work for us - why should we send our kids?

Thank goodness my mom is on my side. My mom is a public school teacher. She wanted to get a job at the new Montessori school that just opened, but first she has to go back to college and get her multiple subjects certificate.

Well, anyway, the whole reason I'm writing this letter is because I am insecure, because I did drop out of school. I'm scared I won't be able to teach my kids. I love John Holt because he says we can just teach ourselves. I sure hope this works! I'm already working on teaching myself as much as I can. I love to read so I read as much as my kids will let me. I read to them a lot, too. I've got several homeschooling pen-pals. I'm trying to improve my spelling and punctuation by writing lots of letters. I think it's working. Tom used to write a lot - poems and short stories. He doesn't write much anymore - he's so busy with work and the kids. I will say something: he wrote a lot more out of school than he ever did in school.

We both should have been homeschooled. But there's nothing we can do about it now except homeschool our own kids. Besides, Tom loved school, or at least he liked the social aspect of it. Where else can you go party with your friends all day?

When Children Resist

Laurie Clark wrote an essay in the August 1993 issue of Mentor, *the newsletter of the Home Education League of Parents, that speaks directly to the discussion GWS readers were having in issue #93 called "When Children Resist Teaching":*

A frequent comment that I hear from people when they discover we homeschool is, "I could never do that - I don't have that kind of relationship with my children." When I probe a little, they often comment that "my children won't let me teach them anything." Well, mine won't either most of

the time if you are talking about school-like teaching and school-like learning. It just doesn't work very well at our house. But I think I have a very good relationship with my three children and they are learning all of the time.

A school-like relationship between teacher and child is very different from a strong healthy relationship between parent and child. It's very difficult for a child to say "no" or resist at school. Disruptions in the classroom must be kept to a minimum if 25 children are to learn the same thing simultaneously. Saying "no" verbally is too painful and embarrassing for most children. When the teacher goes too fast there is little opportunity for the student to say "no, stop, I don't get it yet." When the teacher goes too slow the student can't say "no, this is boring, I think I'll go do something else." Students don't have permission to cry or have a temper tantrum or daydream.

Children *do* resist at school, but it's often in passive or aggressive (disruptive) ways. For the child, the result may be failure to learn or, even worse, the loss of ability to trust his or her own inner voice. At times, when my oldest daughter, now 8, has cried or lashed out when she is frustrated over something she is trying to learn, I wonder how she would have behaved in school. Would she cope by pretending she understood? By being silly and pretending it doesn't matter? By feeling like a failure? By cheating? By being too compliant and learning not to believe her gut feelings? I see her emotional outbursts are a way of coping with her feelings and communicating them to others. She is being very authentic. Her *behavior* at those times can drive me crazy, but she has put her trust in me, said "no," and I have heard it. Understanding is the next step.

According to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, "resist" means to "take a stand; to withstand the force or effect of and to exert oneself to counteract or defeat." The ability to resist is something I very much want our children to have. The fact that our children are getting their education at home instead of at traditional schools is a great act of resistance. Ultimately, we want our children to be able to resist those things that are harmful and dangerous to themselves and to others. We want them to say "no" when faced with things that don't feel right. We want them to eventually stand up and help others resist when necessary.

However, when children resist us as parents, mentors, and friends, we may panic and think that there is something wrong with us or with our children or even with our curriculum. And it's unpleasant to live with all day long! Some of us grew up in environments where saying "no" was a great act of defiance and disrespect, and we were bad for even considering it. Others of us were afraid to say "no" for fear of hurting our parents or losing their love.

There is another way to look at this resistance. We can see it as an opportunity to understand our children and their unique needs. Resistance can be viewed as an opportunity to build and maintain a deeper relationship with our children. ...

Breaking Vicious Cycle

Monica Satterwhite wrote in the August 1993 issue of the Pennsylvania Homeschoolers newsletter:

... I am a homeschooling mom of an 8-year-old 4th grader, Sean, and my 3-year-old daughter, Jayme, who will be celebrating her 21st birthday next year (smile). Oh, did I mention - we are African American.

I'm writing this little note to hopefully dispel some of the misconceptions that all homeschooling families are typically white, rural families or suburbanites. More and more African-American families are discovering that homeschooling is an option, as in our case. Living in the neighborhood where God has put us at this time put a tremendous burden on Sean. We hesitated to buy him new things for fear he would get assaulted by other kids on the way home from school. In addition, he was constantly getting into altercations of some sort regardless of my husband's and my intervention.

We thought that maybe if we sent him to parochial school, the situation would change, but it didn't. He was labeled ADHD and spent more time in the principal's office than in class. What I was witnessing was what so many black families such as myself experienced - the start of a vicious cycle. The child is labeled learning disabled or "hyper" and is stuck in a room with another 12 to 15 primarily African-American boys and is written off. The child develops such a low self-esteem that he begins to get attention any way he can - i.e. goofing off, fighting, stealing, etc. His school days become less than something positive and eventually he may drop out and begin a street life. I have seen this so many times and decided that this will not happen to my children, particularly my young son.

The plight of the African-American male has to change, and I believe homeschooling and taking an interest in our children is a definite beginning.

I remember telling Sean that he wasn't going to return to school the next year and that he was going to be homeschooled. His reaction: "Thanks, Mom, I love you." I then knew that it was going to be all right.

Query about Deaf Child

Christa Barker of Indiana writes:

We have just begun homeschooling our three sons this year. Our oldest is 10 and profoundly deaf. We are following the unschooling method, but are concerned that because of his deafness he will not learn in the same way as the other two sons. Deafness does create a unique set of circumstances in that information does not come to him in the traditional way. If anyone has had experience or can offer suggestions or advice, please write.

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Watching Children Learn

Developing Resourcefulness

From a longer letter that Nancy Deaver (WA) wrote to Susan Zacharakis-Jutz (GWS #91):

I am learning to stop feeling guilty at having to set limits for what I can offer. My children certainly don't really *want* for anything. Sure it would be nice to have a little more money (mostly I'd buy books for us or we'd take an evening out). And by our society's standards we are certainly less well-off than most, living as we do on one irregular income. Most neighbors have more than we do in the way of cars/homes/clothes/toys. But that to me seems a false standard. One look at the human condition throughout most of the world should tell you we are better off than most, wealthier than we need to be. And the most important things are truly in place: a comfortable, relatively smooth-running home (running smoothly when I don't overextend myself), plenty of good food, two happy and most-of-the-time loving parents (we all get cranky sometimes), and time to spend together sharing our lives. We share wonderful reading together – lots of it, we share the simple time of our days, we share the fellowship of family and we share stability in a world that seems filled with uncertainty. I've seen unhappiness and discontent and more than one divorce in families that either had more or "did more" for their kids.

... You asked about who pays for activities and if there are financial limits. Yes, in our family there are financial limits. For the most part we, the parents, have paid for activities. The kids all get a rather meager allowance which isn't enough to pay for expenses like these. However, up until this year we never had too many activities to worry about. But now, with trips (gas) to Port Townsend, where our homeschooling group meets, fees for skating, swimming, or gymnastics, it is easy to go over our budget.

An interesting opportunity presented itself to us. A neighbor with a one-year-old baby girl approached us for once-a-week daycare. At first I laughed, feeling already over-taxed in time and energy. But surprisingly, the kids all wanted to do it. I was really surprised but thought about it again. I didn't want to be the one stuck with all the work in an already busy day. So I told the kids we could take it on if they would share equally in the work of taking care of Kendra, the baby. If they did, they would be the direct recipients of the earnings in that the money would be used for a homeschooling fund for our activities and books and things we want together.

I have to say that the kids were wonderful on the days that we had Kendra. They pitched right in and helped out without complaint. But it was their choice to do this, and I do make sure that they feel the benefit of the money we earn. I'm glad to have a homeschool fund.

Diana, just turning 11, has been working for some time to earn her own money. After seeing several of her friends with nice mountain bikes, she decided last summer that she didn't want to wait until she could have enough birthday and Christmas money to buy one, and she was tired of the hand-me-down bikes that we have around here. So she took all of her savings and took a loan from us for the $50 she didn't have and shopped around with her father and bought herself a beautiful bike.

She works for a neighbor, feeding animals and watering plants when they go away, and she does household help for another neighbor on our road. She also got her first babysitting job there while the parents were upstairs in a meeting. She took care of the little ones down in the rec room. Her flexible schedule really helped with this as she was needed during regular school hours. Before that, she worked baking and selling cookies – her own business.

The result of all this was that she paid us back the $50 in less than two months and now has a bike to show for it. All at the age of 10. She has the nicest bike in the family! I guess my whole point here is that again my guilty feelings over not providing more for my children are unnecessary. They may not have everything they desire right away, but they are developing a wonderful resourcefulness. Since she paid us back, Diana has saved up over $100 toward her next goal, although this time she wants to overshoot her goal so she won't have the uncomfortable feeling of having to spend every bit of money she has.

Learning by Observing

Karen Mende-Fridkis (NJ) writes:

Wanda Rezac's letter in GWS #93 concerning adjusting expectations hit home for me. Too often I find that my expectations for my oldest child are way out of whack with her capabilities. The more I ease off and let her be, the smoother our relationship is. I have found that in our family our children do best with a minimum of adult interference. They all have their own agenda to attend to. I try to respect their inner tempos and give them enough space to fulfill their needs. I realize that even with our very loose schedule there is still a substantial amount of time in the day that they are requested to participate in activities not of their choosing. There are chores to be completed, meals to be eaten and cleaned up after, bath time, adult social dates, and weekly errands.

Jacob used to begin each day with the question, "What are we doing today?" I would answer him with a list of the day's scheduled activities: "We're visiting the library today" or "Today is play group" or "We're staying home today." These

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answers didn't seem to satisfy him. He kept repeating the question. So I changed my response to "What would you like to do?" His answer changed to "Play with you." Altering the answer seemed to help him feel more settled and more in control of his day. He wakes up with a plan in his mind. At 3 3/4 he has definite ideas and arrangements for his days. For example, today he painted his face as soon as he woke up. He divides his days into quiet times alone with his toy people and animals, playing with his older sister Kate, working with me or his father, listening to stories, or interacting with his younger brother Gabriel. No one had to instruct him on how to balance his day.

Kate too has an internal agenda. Her inner voice must be telling her that she needs to set aside time each day to draw. There are days when she crawls out of bed and sits down to draw immediately. She continues until the need is met. Every day she carves out a chunk of time to spend with paper and markers. If we have been out all day, she draws before bed or in the car. In addition to setting aside time for her artwork, she also divides her day into active and quiet periods.

Through watching the children I am learning about how they interact with their world. Observation is a key to their learning. One day Jacob asked me if I would weed whack the tall grass with him. He was amazed when I told him I didn't know how to use the weed whacker. How could I possibly not know this? He then told me how the machine operates and explained to me that he learned by watching his father use it. One of his frequent pastimes is taking the weed cutter out of the shed and pretending to cut with it. When his grandfather told him that he would take one of his golf clubs to a machinist to be cut down for him, Jacob asked, "Can I come? I like to watch people do new things." Clearly he learns by observing others and then imitating their actions.

Kate too has been a keen observer all her life. I remember all too well sitting on the sidelines holding a toddler Kate on my lap while the other children sat in a circle learning a new finger play or singing a song. Kate would never participate but instead chose to sing the song to me when we returned home and were alone. When she was a little older, she sat on the edge of the pool watching the older children jump and swim. It seemed she would never enter the pool, but in her own time she grew comfortable with the water and ventured forth to test her newly emerging courage.

The other day my cousin came over and picked a 4-leaf clover from our yard. Kate was stunned. How did she do that? Later I watched as Kate sat and stared at the grass searching for her own 4-leaf clover. She also listens to her dad play piano and sits down to imitate him. She copies my beginner piano songs easily.

Baby Gabriel was a study in how children learn the other day. When we were at a Fourth of July picnic, he found a ball. He picked it up, held it over his shoulder, and dropped it. The ball rolled down his back and bounced on the floor behind him. He scooted around in a half circle, spied the ball, and grinned. Then he picked it up and repeated the entire process. He did this about twenty times. For several days afterwards, when he found a ball in the house he would crawl over to it and toss it over his shoulder, but never with the same frequency or intensity that he had had at the picnic. One or two throws were all he needed. He knew what the ball would do!

Enjoying Quiet Times

Helene Martin Lynn (NY) writes:

In response to the letter in GWS #94 from Jeanne Ferrari-Amas ("Prefers Fewer Activites"): It is August and my children and I have just returned from a very busy trip to England with their choir. Right now, there are no scheduled activities for us and life is sweet. While a gentle rain is falling outside, I am sitting at the kitchen table reading and responding to mail. My daughter (10) is writing a play based on the Boxcar Children, my dog is snoring at my feet, and my son (13) is in another room reading.

Today's activities have included a trip to the dentist, laundry, dishes from last night's get-together with friends, a family discussion on rocket power systems and life on other planets, and a walk to the nearest dump.

When fall activities start to entice us, I hope I can remember your letter, this day, and why I started "unschooling" in the first place.

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FOCUS:
Trying School – And Leaving Again

For this issue's Focus, we interviewed five long-time homeschoolers who had tried school and then decided to return to homeschooling.

Curious About Social Life

Interview with Anne Morse of Maine:

Why did you decide to try school?

Well, it was a decision that I'd been thinking about for a long time, because I always sort of wondered if maybe I was missing something, or if I'd have a good time in school. I had a lot of friends who really wanted me to go to school with them. So I decided that junior high would be a good place to start, if I did want to go to school, because everybody would be new. I decided to try seventh grade.

What kinds of things did you feel you might be missing?

I thought maybe I was missing out on having more friends, or if I wanted to play sports or something - just wondering if I was missing out on some fun.

How did your parents react when you wanted to try school?

They weren't *pleased*, but they decided that if I wanted to do it, they weren't going to stand in my way.

Did you do anything in particular to prepare for going?

I did worry a little about being able to do the work. I did some make-up work, and I felt like I was on pretty solid ground.

What was it like when you finally went?

Amazing. It was really frightening, because there were so many people. There's 800 kids in the seventh and eighth grade, and the building's not that big, so it was overwhelming. I had thought I was going to be in classes with my best friend, because the guidance counselor promised that it would be set up that way. I got there, and they started assigning homerooms, and we were in different homerooms, so I got really nervous. It turned out OK, though, because we were in the rest of the classes together.

Did anything turn out the way you expected?

Not really. It was completely different from how I expected it to be. Everything was going really, really fast. I remember the turning point, when I decided this was not for me, was when my friend and I were walking down the hallway, and all of a sudden everybody stopped moving because there were so many people in the hallway that everything had gotten jammed.

How long had you been there at that point?

That was the second day! And then the third day, I didn't go back. I just said, "No, that's it, no more." I started thinking, maybe I'm not missing out on anything. All I'm missing is being squished into a little classroom eight hours of the day. And I have *enough* friends.

Did you have a chance to see what it was like to be in a classroom?

Yeah, we hadn't started doing much work yet, but it was sort of apparent what we were going to be doing. I felt like I could do a lot of the work, or in some cases was beyond what they were doing, but with some of the work, I felt on shaky ground. I really don't like sitting in a classroom, it's just something that I'm not in tune with, because I have trouble concentrating when there's a lot going on.

So then, when you wanted to quit, how did your parents feel about that?

My mom did not want me to quit after such a short time. She wanted me to stay in and experiment with it a little longer. She took me to the guidance counselor, and they were trying to talk me out of leaving, but I just said no. The counselor said it's not that bad, everyone feels nervous at first, and I just felt, "That's nice, bye."

How did you know to trust yourself, when everyone else was saying stick it out?

Well, I've always had that ability. I just trust my instinct.

Did the experience of trying school change how you homeschooled afterwards?

No, not really. It's been two years now, since that experience, and I think my homeschooling is pretty much the same. It has changed my feelings about school in some ways, though. I think it's more - sort of - stupid than I thought before, and I don't worry so much about missing out. I have more friends now than I did then, because I know more people around here.

What did your friends think about your leaving?

They were pretty mad at me for a while. They said, "Everybody wants you to come back." But after a week or two they realized I wasn't coming back. I don't think they understand why I left, because school is what they know, and they don't have a choice, they have to go.

How much do you pay attention to what's going on at school, or how school thinks kids should learn?

Not very much. I know what's going on at school, but how they think kids should learn - that's just something I try to ignore!

What would you say to other homeschoolers who are considering trying school?

I would encourage them to try it, but only if they had a way out, not if their parents were going to make them stay.

What do you think about that issue in a larger sense, the issue of sticking with things? Do you think people are right to say you should stick with something once you start it?

Well, I feel like maybe I should have tried school for a little longer, but I don't think that you should be pushed to try something and to stay in a bad situation.

Homeschooling Program Was Too Rigid

Interview with Mark Andersen of California:

Why did you go to school in ninth grade?

Basically because the way I was doing homeschooling, it felt like I was just doing regular school but doing it at home. People were saying homeschooling should be different because you feel really free, but I wasn't feeling that. To me, it was like I was doing regular school but with no other kids around me, so I wanted to be able to have the experience of going to school with other kids. That was the biggest draw.

Who were those people saying that homeschooling should be so different from school?

Well, other homeschoolers were telling us how great home school was, especially one family who was using Clonlara and homeschooling in a very free way. But I was using textbooks and having to keep to a regular schedule.

Do you know why you were doing it that way?

I didn't know there was another way. We got introduced to homeschooling at a church that we used to go to. A friend of ours mentioned it to us because when I was in kindergarten, the whole church knew how I used to destroy the classroom! So they said why don't you try him in home school, and we got caught up in a group of people who were all homeschooling using a particular correspondence program.

What was school like for you?

I didn't like it at all. I found out that it was pretty much the same as the way we had been homeschooling, except for the kids being there, and that didn't turn out to be so great after all. I'm different from the public school kids because of homeschooling, I guess, and I was in a crowd that many of the other kids didn't like. I didn't like the whole crowd scene, the idea that you can't hang out with certain people because you wear different shirts. And it's just a whole different attitude - you have to hate your parents, for example. I did make a lot of friends, but now that I look back and realize that none of them keep in contact with me and I don't keep in contact with them, it's kind of like, they weren't really friends at all. And a lot of the kids didn't like me. The worst was when a gang member was chasing after me, threatening my life! That's when I decided to leave.

How long did you stay in school?

About four weeks.

Was it OK with your family that you wanted to leave?

Yeah, my mom had never been that happy with my decision to go, so when I said I want to get out, she let me get out.

Did your school experience affect the way you homeschooled for the rest of that year?

We got into a whole new way of homeschooling. At first I didn't completely understand it, but I started to realize how it would be when we went to a movie and discussed it and I got credit for that. That's when it hit me how different this was going to be.

How come you and your mother were willing to try this new way of homeschooling when before you couldn't imagine it?

After I left public school I took a long break from any type of schoolwork. I said that I needed to take a break. Then after about a month, I decided we should get working again, and we talked about whether we should go with the old way or if we wanted to try something new. We were talking to those homeschoolers I mentioned about different ways to do it, and I guess at that point my mom started to understand what Clonlara was all about. She explained it to me, and after a while I started to understand too. I guess my experience at school had something to do with it - we were ready to try something different.

So what kind of things have you been doing in homeschooling this year?

Just experiencing different things like going to plays, reading books instead of textbooks - and I have my own say-so about what I read, which I didn't have before - writing letters and getting credit for that, going to museums. If I don't want to do schoolwork, we don't do it, and if I want to do twice as much one day, I do that. Sometimes I'll go out with my friends to do an activity and then come back and tell my mom how many credits in a certain subject to write down for that activity. Homeschooling is what you want to do, because you're your own teacher. It's a completely different world from the way we were doing it before.

Do you regret having gone to school, or was it a worthwhile experiment?

It was definitely a worthwhile experiment. That's basically what it was - an experiment. I could probably put it down for science credit! I wanted to know what school was like, what I was supposedly missing. Now I know that I'm not missing anything that I need, or that I want. I also know that you can completely change the way you homeschool.

Interview with Tina Andersen of California:

What were your reasons for trying fifth grade?

The workbooks we were using at home were way too hard for me, and I wanted to try and get new friends. I'd never been to school before, and I asked my mom if I could go to school for fifth grade.

What made the workbooks hard?

They didn't put things clearly, they just said read this and you'll get it, but I didn't get it. I had workbooks for every subject, but the math and Social Studies ones were the hardest.

Did your mother know how you felt about them?

I think she knew that I hated doing math, but she thought it would be best for me. She didn't know I could use anything else.

What was school like?

The first school I went to was a private school, and the work was a lot harder than the work I'd been doing at home. Then we moved, and I went to a public school, and the work was a lot easier. I did make friends, like I had expected to, and I had fun. But I thought the classes would be smaller. We had a class of 37! I didn't know there would be rules that said no talking during class, just during recess. I also thought the cafeteria would be a little better!

What made you decide to go back to homeschooling?

I found out that my brother was having so much fun in the new homeschooling program he was using. He had tried school earlier that year but left after a month. When I got home from school he was usually off doing something - he was doing activities for schoolwork. He got credit for doing things like going to the zoo. So I said, "Hey, wait a second, I want to do this!"

Did you think of leaving school in the middle of the year?

I really wanted to graduate from fifth grade in school, but I said to my mom, "As soon as I get out of fifth grade, please sign me up for Clonlara."

What do you think homeschooling will be like for you this coming year?

I know that I won't have to use as many textbooks, and I can't wait for that. And not having homework! I'm looking forward to doing things around the city where I live, and going up to Spokane with my dad at the end of this month. When I came home from school, I used to think, I miss staying home all the time, being able to do what I want, not being kept in a classroom all day. I think homeschooling is a lot more fun than regular school. Most kids at school liked me, but a lot of them didn't. When I go back to homeschooling, I won't have any worries about, if I go to school tomorrow, will I have no one to talk to?

What do you think your social life will be like now?

One best friend of mine has a brother and a sister, and every year one of them goes on home study. Next year it's going to be her sister, and I know her very well, so next year I can do things with her during the day, and I can't wait for that. And after school I can still call up my best friend, who goes to school, and ask her to spend the night.

Family Circumstances Changed

Interview with Lara Brooks of New York:

Why did you go to school for fifth grade?

My mom is a single parent, and she was going to go to work outside the home that year, to be the administrative assistant at a nursing home. She didn't want to leave my younger brother and me home alone, so we both went to school for that year.

Had you been homeschooled entirely up to that time?

I went to school for kindergarten and half of first grade, and then my mom took me out of first grade. She didn't like my teachers, and I was ahead of the class but they kept holding me back in math and reading and she was getting angry at that, so she thought I could do better at home.

Was it a big decision for her to send you to school in fifth grade?

Yeah, it was. She had been thinking about it for a while, and finally she decided that it would be the best thing just to try it for a year, and if it didn't work out we could go back to homeschooling.

How did you feel when she told you about that decision?

I don't really remember, but I remember being excited about going. I had never really thought about going before, but when she told me that I was going, I was pretty happy about it.

What was it like for you in school that year?

I liked it a lot. I had a great teacher; we got along really well, and I had a lot of friends. I had a few bad experiences, but basically I liked it a lot. One bad experience was that I got into a really big fight with a friend at the end of the year. She was in our clique, and she turned a lot of people against me, so the end of the year was bad, and I was glad the summer was coming.

A lot of parents wonder whether, by homeschooling, they're making it impossible for their kids to adjust to school if they end up going at some point. What was it like to go in at age 10?

It was OK. The first day, my teacher did this great thing. She passed out a piece of paper with all these questions on it about what we liked, and we all filled it out and then passed it around, so you could find the kids who had the same interests as you, and be friends with them. That worked really well: I met a lot of

people through that.

Did you feel that you were prepared academically?

I was pretty much up to grade level. I was a little bit behind in math, but that's never been a strong subject for me. Basically I was OK; my mom had kept me up to grade level very well. Sometimes it would get tough, because I was used to being at home and I would get frustrated, but overall I did OK and I liked it a lot.

Do you remember what would frustrate you?

I remember having a lot of homework at night, and having to get up so early - stuff like that. It would be a long day and then I'd come home and have all this work to do. It got really tiring.

So then what happened? Why did you leave after that year?

Well, actually, I decided that I did want to go on to middle school, which was sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. The middle school in our area was pretty rough, but I wanted to go anyway because I had a lot of friends who were going and I did like school. But my mom said I couldn't go because she thought I was too young - it was almost like a high school there, and it was pretty rough, there were drugs and everything. I still wanted to go, but she said no, and I was really mad. We had a lot of fights about it. The next year, she still went to work but my brother and I stayed home.

What was that year like?

That was tough, it was really tough. It was really hard being home with my brother. My mother would leave us work to do in the morning, and then she'd come home at night and help us with it, whatever we couldn't finish. For about half of the year, I'd go next door to babysit in the afternoons.

Looking back, are there things you can imagine that would have made that year go better? Do you have any ideas for others who might have to be in the same situation?

I don't know; all in all, I think it worked out pretty well. It could have been a lot worse. I think it was good that every afternoon I did have something to do - babysitting or horseback riding or something. I think it's good to have something planned so you aren't at home all day.

My mom worked at that job for two years, when we were living in Maryland. Then we moved up here to New York, and now she works at home.

What's your life like now? Do you have things you do outside the home?

I work at a stable that's near us, so I'm there almost every day.

How do you feel when you look back - do you think you should have gone to middle school?

Well, when we moved here, I was going to go to seventh grade. Since I didn't know anybody here, I thought that school would be a good way to meet people. I went for a week, and I really hated it. I didn't like any of my teachers, everything was really boring, and I didn't like any of the kids. My mom said I could quit. I think that if I had gone to sixth grade, it would have been a little bit easier to go on to seventh grade when I came up here. I would have been used to things like changing classes. I think if I had gone to sixth grade then, I probably wouldn't be homeschooling now.

Do you wish that was what happened?

Sometimes I do wish that, because I only have one or two friends who are homeschooled, and I don't see them that often. So all my friends are in school, and they're all talking about high school, and a lot of them are on my back to go. It's kind of frustrating, because I don't really want to go, but sometimes I do, just to see what it's like. When I remember my seventh grade experience, I remember that I really didn't like it, and I have to keep that in mind. My science teacher was really prejudiced against women, and he'd make all these terrible comments. And the kids were really obnoxious - you'd try to make friends, but they all had their cliques because they'd known each other since kindergarten. And there was so much homework - I just really didn't like it.

How aware are you of what the kids are doing in school now?

I'm pretty aware of it. My best friend is a year behind me, she's going in to eighth grade, and she comes home every day and tells me what happened.

I wanted to know what school was like, what I was supposedly missing. Now I know that I'm not missing anything that I need, or that I want. I also know that you can completely change the way you homeschool.

Does that affect your homeschooling at all? Do you try to do what they do?

Not too much. We don't have a curriculum right now, so we're pretty much the opposite of public school. Sometimes I worry - like, I was supposed to be doing a foreign language all through seventh and eighth grade, but I'm only going to be starting it now, in ninth grade, so sometimes that worries me, that if I did decide to go to high school I'd be behind in that. But I think I'm OK with everything else.

How important is it to you to be on the same level as the school kids?

It's pretty important, because I might go to school next year or the year after, and I think it would be harder to adjust if I weren't up to grade level. I think that this year I'm really going to try to study more, because this past year we really didn't do a lot of schoolwork.

Did going to school for that year in fifth grade change the way you homeschooled at all? Did you start doing things in a more school-like way afterwards?

Actually, after going to school for the year, even though I did like it, it changed homeschooling a lot, because after that I really pulled away from anything academic. I didn't even want to look at a book, and I didn't read for about a year. I was just so turned off by everything. So that did change homeschooling. I used to get into fights with my mom when she would try to get me to do

work, because I just didn't want to do it after being made to do it all the time. I liked a couple of the things we did in school - we did a big unit on the Civil War and I really liked doing that - but we read all these books that I was bored with, and the math bored me, and we did so much of it, over and over again, that, I don't know, I just didn't want to learn anything after that. I think I'm still getting over that. Even this past year, it was really hard for me to just sit down and study, because I was really turned off by it.

Wanted to Compete on School Team

Interview with Jessica Spicer (WI):

What were the circumstances surrounding your going to school?

I went to school my freshman year of high school to be on the gymnastics team. In Wisconsin homeschoolers can't compete on the school's team, so I had to decide whether I was going to stay home and not do gymnastics anymore, or go to school to compete. I decided to go to school.

I worried most about the academics, so that summer I studied multiplication flash cards, and I learned how to add, subtract, and divide fractions. I knew that I would be going into algebra in school so I was a little nervous that I wouldn't be up to everybody else's level. That's about the only preparation I did academically. I wasn't too worried about fitting in socially because I already knew a lot of the gymnasts, but I did go out and buy all the right clothes that summer.

How did your parents feel about your decision to go to school?

My mom was really behind me in the gymnastics aspect. She wanted me to pursue this interest, but she didn't want me to have to go to school for it. We all felt a little cheated by that, but she supported me because she knew it was something I wanted to do. My father basically didn't want me to go. I knew he felt that way, but I decided to go anyway.

What was school like for you?

I did all of those school activities - I was in two sports, drama club, went to dances and football games. That year in gymnastics I went to state as a freshman. I was on the honor roll, so academics were not a problem. It wasn't always easy for me, but I was willing to work. Friends-wise I fit right in, and I was sort of in the popular group, if that's what you want to call it.

Then that summer, after going to school for the whole year, I decided that I didn't want to go back. I looked back on the year and realized that it really wasn't that great and it *wasn't* something I wanted to do again. A big reason was the effect school had on the relationship between my family and me. When I was in school, I felt my family was weird or different, and then once I was out, they become my friends again, the people I enjoyed being with. I also noticed I was becoming - well, shallow, or I wasn't really thinking anymore. My thinking was devoted to clothing choices or writing good papers for the grade, not because I loved doing it. When I first went in, I thought I wasn't going to worry about my grades at all, but throughout the course of the year they became very important to me.

I want to come back to that, but first, what happened when you decided not to go back? How did people react?

After I said, "I'm not going to go back, I'm going to continue my homeschooling," I just didn't arrive on the first day of school. I didn't let my coaches know ahead of time. I just didn't know how to let them know; I wasn't mature enough to deal with their pressuring me to come back. Within two weeks the coaches started calling me, and at first I said, "No, I've made this decision," but after a while they started trying to think of a way to get around the system, to let me compete without going to school. I wrote to the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association, but they didn't even respond to my letter. Then we went to the school board, and they said I could compete but my points wouldn't count, which meant I couldn't go to state. I felt that if I did that, the other gymnasts would look down on me. I'd be taking coaches' time and not benefitting the team.

Finally one night one of the coaches called and said, all you have to do is come to school in the afternoons, and you can take all electives, and you'll be allowed to compete with the team. The WIAA requirement was that you had to attend school a minimum of 20 hours a week. We also found out that I didn't have to start school until one week before the first meet. I could act as a transfer student.

So I decided to go back part-time. I took Spanish, Driver's Ed, a sculpture class, and History. It was a very light schedule. My original plan was to drop out right after the state competition, and I thought I could do that. But once I was in the system, I believed in it again, and I believed that finishing that Spanish class and getting the credit was very important. I thought, how can I just drop out? I was swept back into the whole system and I couldn't get out.

Why did you finally decide not to go back the next year, then?

I had the same feelings that summer that I'd had the previous summer. I realized how silly I was and how easily I got swept up by the whole environment. This time I was a little smarter. I wrote the coaches a letter saying I'm not coming back, and thank you, but don't call me. The coach wrote me a nice letter saying she understood my reasons.

Were you sorry to give up gymnastics at this point?

My goal when I started gymnastics was to go to state, and I did that twice. I think I was done with gymnastics, basically.

Thinking back to your time in school, what was it like to be going to school when the rest of the family was homeschooling?

We're part of a large homeschoolers' group, and during that time, I just didn't go. I felt really out of touch with all those people. For my family, their social group was the homeschoolers' group, and mine was at school. I remember times when they would go to group meetings and I would stay home and do homework. They would always tell me to come but I had no desire to.

At first when I came home at night I felt like I had missed out, and for a while that bothered me. But school became such a big part of my life that what was happening at home wasn't important, wasn't the real stuff. It's not that I didn't care what was happening at home, but there was an element of that.

Given how you see all that now, do you regret going to school?

If I hadn't gone, I m ght not have the perspective I have now. John Holt can tell me how negative school is, but now I have experienced it for myself, so in that sense I don't regret going. At this point, two years later, I feel I've learned from the experience. But I do feel badly that I stepped away from my family during that time and let them become sort of insignificant.

I can really see what you mean about needing to know it for yourself, and I've often thought it makes sense that kids who have never been to school would feel that. They can't always just take it on faith, I guess.

I wonder about it too. My parents decided to homeschool us because of the bad experiences they had in school. As a homeschooler, I didn't really know how bad school was until I experienced it. I wonder if some homeschoolers will think, "School isn't that bad, why don't I let my kids try it?" On the other hand, I think that the strength of my positive experience with homeschooling would have been enough to carry me into homeschooling my own children, even if I'd never tried school.

I wonder too whether there are other ways to "know for oneself" about school. Some kids seem to get that feeling just from having friends who go to school, or from trying school for a shorter time. I mean, I know kids who are opposed to certain things about school, like testing, even though they've never experienced those things.

Yes, I know people like that also. I know one homeschooler who has never been part of the system at all and she knows she doesn't want to. Or maybe some people can try school for a shorter time - my brother did that.

I wanted to come back to your point about how grades gradually became more important to you.

When I first started school, I was a teacher's pet. I was genuinely interested, I wanted to learn, and it was a big challenge. That's how it was at home - math was an exciting adventure. That attitude lasted for a while in school until I noticed that no one else was acting that way. The teachers sort of singled me out because they detected that I had energy and was interested. After a while I stopped showing my interest; I slipped into the background. Being interested isn't encouraged by the students. It wasn't that anyone ever *said*, "Don't be so interested," but I felt that. I felt that it was looked down on.

I think a lot of people imagine that homeschoolers will be able to go to school and be different about it. People say, "I'll go in but I'll care about learning, not about grades," and that sort of thing. Some people even argue that homeschoolers will have an important effect on the school environment because of this. But you're reminding us that it's not so easy.

I thought that I could go in and just be who I am, love learning, wear my hair any way I wanted, and that I would have the strength to be myself no matter what. But I just couldn't do it. I feel like I come from a pretty strong family - we're all individuals, have high self-esteem. But in school there were just so many people all acting the same that it was oppressive. I also think I felt like I needed to assimilate, because there were so many different things already about me.

I think it's fine that I dressed the way everyone else did, but it's not fine that I started believing that school was right, or what I needed, and believing that my friends were more important than my family. I was forgetting what I really believed, and that is not all right.

Do you think your parents saw all those changes in you? Did they ever say anything?

If they had said anything, I probably would have denied the fact that I had changed. I'm sure I couldn't see it in myself when I was in the middle of it. I think they saw that I was swept up in the system and just hoped I would eventually realize it. We weren't talking with each other on that level anymore. I think I had to say, "I'm not going back," and it was only at that point that we could talk about it and say wasn't it dumb how I was so possessed by grades and that sort of thing.

What was it like to go back to homeschooling afterwards? Did you have to get those attitudes or feelings out of your system?

Summers helped me get school out of my system. It was like there was my school person and then my out-of-school person, so when I decided not to go back, I stopped being that school person. I just let her go. That's partly why I don't keep in touch with any of my school friends.

One thing I think school did help me with is that I tend to do more academics now. I don't know if that would have happened with age anyway, but school did make me feel that I had to catch up a little bit. The year I dropped out, I was planning to be a dancer and then go to college. My first experience with deciding not to go to college, or thinking there are alternatives, was when I started studying for the SAT. I thought, this is stupid, this means nothing to me, I just can't do this. If college is going to be anything like this, or if they require me to take this test to go to college, I'll go to a college that doesn't require the SAT, or I won't go at all. That's when I first started thinking maybe I should just continue this alternative education forever.

If I hadn't gone, I might not have the perspective I have now. John Holt can tell me how negative school is, but now I have experienced it for myself, so in that sense I don't regret going. At this point, two years later, I feel I've learned from the experience.

What are you doing now instead of going to college?

I'm about to go to Washington, DC to do an internship at a public policy research foundation. I'm going because I'm interested in politics and I want to see how change is created. How do you change our government that is not working for a lot of people? That's one of the questions that I hope to answer. While I'm there I'm also going to visit other organizations that are working for change in different ways.

How did you get the internship?

I wrote to them and asked if they had internships. I stated that I was a homeschooler and gave my reasons for wanting to do this internship instead of going to college right now. The director wrote back and said, "I homeschool my children!" I filled out an application and they called me a week later and asked me to come. To find a place to live there, I wrote to a few families in the GWS Directory. I got one response, and then through a friend I learned of another homeschooling family in the area, so I'm going to try living with both those families.

Do you see yourself going to college at some point?

I'm not sure. If there's something I feel I really need from college, say if I wanted to be a doctor, I'd go. But at this point I feel I can get a lot of the benefits of college in other ways. The benefits of college I see are learning and living away from home. I think there are many other ways to do those things in a non-artificial environment. I think it's important to look at all the options you have before choosing a traditional college. Many of these options are more consistent with the philosophy of homeschooling.

Resources & Recommendations

Newsletters

One Earth Trading Post

GWS reader Leenie Hobbie sent us a copy of her family's newsletter, *One Earth Trading Post*, which she says "promotes creative simplicity as a viable alternative to consumerism and a useful ally for families." The newsletter has articles about things you can make yourself, about conserving energy and materials, and generally about living simply. $10/6 issues from One Earth Trading Post, HC 60 Box 81E, Points WV 25437; free issue upon request.

Peacework (special issue)

We received an announcement from the American Friends Service Committee about a special issue of their newsletter, *Peacework*. The issue is called "Violence, Nonviolence, and the 20th Century," and it has an introduction by Howard Zinn, author of our popular title, *A People's History of the United States*. The issue also has articles on how U.S. social justice and peace movements responded to the challenges of each decade in this century. $1.50 a copy (2-9 copies/$1 each) from Peacework, AFSC, 2161 Mass. Ave., Cambridge MA 02140.

Quaere Verum (by homeschoolers)

Quaere Verum is a newsletter edited by Mary Bercier, a homeschooling teenager. It focuses on such issues as "Does homeschooling meet our academic needs" and how homeschoolers feel about socialization. The writing is mostly by kids, with some from parents, too. The newsletter is published four times a year, free of charge, from PO Box 23, Rayne LA 70578.

Home-Schooled Kid

Maggie Cole, 96 Acorn St. Millis MA 02054, writes:

I am seeking stories, letters, poems, book reviews, interviews, etc. from home learners ages 3 to 8 for a new newsletter, *Home-Schooled Kid*. It will consist entirely of writings by young homeschoolers. The first issue will be sent out in January. Subscriptions are $16/yr for 6 issues; sample issue $3. Please send any writings you would like to share.

Pen-Pal Newsletter

Jennifer Eichholz, 228 Waverly Rd, Wilmington DE 19803-3135, writes:

I am starting a pen-pal newsletter. If readers, of any age, would like to be listed, send me your name, address, birthdate, and a letter describing yourself and your interests. Also mention if you would like to find a birthday twin. Anyone sending a pen-pal listing can send an ad for trading or selling hobby items, which I will print for free. In the newsletter, there will also be articles on hobbies, birthday twins, free ads to subscribers, a focus on one pen-pal each issue, and more.

Please send a SASE for subscription information and a free copy of the first issue when it's completed.

Environmental Club

Stephanie Scheck of California writes:

Along with another homeschooling family, we (my husband Dennis, David (7), Heather (2), and I) have started a Kids for Saving Earth Club (KSE). KSE is a nonprofit environmental organization with over half a million members worldwide. It is dedicated to educating and empowering children of all ages to take positive, peaceful action on behalf of the earth.

Right now we are involved in KSE's Rainforest action program. KSE has a matching funds arrangement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Each dollar that KSE collects is matched one for one by the NFWF. The land purchased through this program will be given to the Costa Rican National Park Service and will bear the name Kids for Saving Earth Rainforest. We have raised money by taking a solar oven outside local business, baking Rainforest granola cookies, and collecting donations for the cookies and copies of our solar oven plans. So far we have collected $120.

Our children really enjoy the club and all of us have learned a great deal about ways to protect the Earth. Anyone interested in starting a club can write to Kids for Saving Earth, PO Box 47247, Plymouth MN 55447.

Source of Tests

Nicky Hardenbergh (MA):

I recently found out about a woman from Missouri who has made an arrangement with Educational Records Bureau to administer ERBs to homeschoolers. I got her name right from the testing office in Princeton. She sends you the tests and you administer them in your home to your children. You have much flexibility in timing, since she sends them to you well before the May 1 return deadline. I know she is not making a big profit on this - I just want her to stay in business. I think

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this year's charges were $35 for the first child and reductions for subsequent siblings. I think there are about six hours' worth of tests. She is: Lulli Akin, 305 Conway Hill Rd, St. Louis MO 63141; 314-434-7948.

Alternative Education Directory Wants Listings

Jerry Mintz of the Alternative Education Resource Organization, 417 Roslyn Rd, Roslyn Hts NY 11577, writes:

I am very pleased to announce that Macmillan Publishing Company and the Solomon Press will publish the most comprehensive directory of educational alternatives in the U.S. and other nations. Please let your readers know that their alternative school, program, or home-school group can be listed in this book if they contact us. There is no cost.

This book will enable students, parents, guidance counselors, teachers, and principals to know about thousands of educational alternatives. It will also contain essays by some of the major educators and writers in this field.

We must have the book in edited form by early 1994, so please help us get this information out as soon as possible. We expect more than 5000 entries!

Looking for Science Resources

Elizabeth Lynch of Colorado writes:

I have a 3-year-old, TJ, and a 2-year-old, Erin. TJ has developed passionate interests in chemistry and physics. We do one experiment a day, and he does the work of a 6 or 7 year old. He is always meticulously careful to follow instructions, and uses his materials safely. At this point, though, I have reached an impasse between the self-evident and the dangerous types of experiments. I am in need of suggestions for books, favorite lab activities, resources, and the ways other parents have fostered these interests without killing all the fun. I could really use the help, as he is a serious kid, looking for serious answers.

Wants to Hear About Volunteer Work

Nora Muller, Rt 1 Box 404-3, Vilas NC 28692, writes:

I am preparing to present a conference workshop in "Service as Part of a Homeschool Curriculum." I would like to hear from homeschoolers who do volunteer work. For each project in which you participate, I would like to know:

1. What is your project?
2. How old are you?
3. With whom do you work on this project?
4. Tell something about your relationship(s) with your co-worker(s), both other volunteers and paid staff.
5. How long have you been participating in this project?
6. How did you learn about and/or get started with this project?
7. How would you rate the importance of this service project in your curriculum?
8. What relation does this project have to your academic and/or professional goals and aspirations?
9. Are chores part of your curriculum? If so, how important are they?
10. What type of academic curriculum do you use? (school-at-home, unit study, unschooling, etc.)
11. Anything else you would like to share about your experience in community service.

It occurs to me that some of these questions may be too difficult for younger people to answer. But I am especially interested in hearing from volunteers of all ages, so maybe those of you who don't feel able to answer my questions fully can get an older person to help you.

[SS:] And if you're writing to Nora about a project or experience that you haven't yet told us at GWS about, send us a copy of the letter!

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Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since our last issue was published. Our complete 1993 Directory was published in GWS #90, and GWS #93 & #94 have the changes that have come in between then and now. Our Directory is *not* a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses, that person is in the Directory (check here *and* in GWS #90, #93, and #94). We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are not in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out.

AL — Paula RUSSELL & John DICK (Joshua/88, Leah/91) 13320 S Shawdee Rd, Huntsville 35803

CA, North (zips 94000 & up) — Marian GOLDEEN & Arthur OGAWA (Grace/87, Evan/90) 920 Addison Av, Palo Alto 94301

CO — Denise & Ralph SUTHERLAND (Rodger/88, Jennifer/91) 1150 Monroe Dr #D, Boulder 80303

CT — Peter & Ruthmarie LAWLER (Colby/84) 780 Chestnut Hill Rd, Glastonbury 06033-4114 **(H)** ••• Shannon VALE & Dennis CORRIGAN (Sean/86, Bridget/89) 84 Delaware Rd, Easton 06612-2106

FL — Janet & William BAKER (Noah/80, Dirke/83) 813-789-0203 (Oldsmar)

GA — Julie & Michael SQUIRES (Elizabeth/88) 6410 Wright Rd, Atlanta 30328 **(H)**

IL — Rhonda ERICSON (Lauren/87) 919 Westchester Dr, Rockford 61107

LA —Car OLIVER (Autumn/76, Adam/79) 5729 Western Dr, Lake Charles 70605 ••• Lateefah Imani Ahmad POLK (Shahidah/82, Kaleemah/84) 2538 Conti St Apt 3, New Orleans 70119

ME — Aimee & Dennis PERRIN (Jamie/80, Camille/85, Jonas/90) 19 Stimson St, Kittery 03904 (change) **(H)** ••• Bob & Annie POOLE (Tobias/86, Estelle/88, Vita/93) RR 1 Box 106, Brooksville 04617

MA — Paul & Rebecca LARRABEE (Susannah/85, Brendan/88) 161 Naples Rd, Brookline 02146 **(H)** ••• Bill & Kathy POWERS (Maggie/85, Danny/87) 39 Myricks St, Berkley 02779 ••• Susan RESSLER (Stephanie/88, Hope/89) 13 C St, Hopkinton 01748

MN — Kathy AHLERS & Curt McNAMARA (Amelia/8, Alena/91) PO Box 21196, Minneapolis 55421 ••• Kate & Bill GOODSON (Nicole/79, Ian/80, Brent/83) 6034 James Av S, Minneapolis 55419 **(H)**

MS —Jim & Kathy RASKETT (Victoria/87, Michael/91) 111 McGuire Dr, Long Beach 39560

MO — Susan LOCK (Cori/79, Casi/81, Gabe/82, Maggie/85, Mandy/88) Rt 1 Box 88A, DeWitt 64639 **(H)**

NH — Teresa & Hugh LANDIS (Brynne/83, Walker/85, Ezra & Owen/88) RR 2 Box 144B, Peterborough 03458

NJ — LeEllen BURTON & Ed SZCZEPANSKI (Joceyln/86, Lucie/89) 20 Main St, Randolph 07869 ••• Steven & Joy KUCHINSKY (Michelle/89, Reuben/92) 116 N 5th Av, Highland Park 08904

NY — Helene Martin LYNN (Seth/79, Ashley/83) 87 Clinton Rd, Bedford Hills 10507 **(H)**

NC — Jocelyn BUTLER & Feryl MASTERS (Duncan/79, Luca/82, Miciah/86, Lilani/90) Rt 1 Box 219, Chocowinity 27817 **(H)** ••• Stephen & Rebecca CORWIN (Brook/81, Heart/85, Forest/89) 800 Fairview Rd #245, Asheville 28803 (change) ••• Susan LASWELL (Sean/74, Sarah/77, Amy/80) 202 Carol St, Carrboro 27510 (change)

OK — Tom & Shawna LINCK (Justin/87, Anna/90, Madison/92) 12862 Magnolia Dr, Piedmont 73078 **(H)**

PA — Anita BOWER & David ROSS (Ross/89) 21 Greentree Ln, Malvern 19355 ••• Mary LOUNSBURY & Sal D'ANGIO (Hillary/87, Claire/92) Creative Education Network, Star Route, Mechanicsville Rd, Carversville 18913

TN — Raymond & Pamila DANIEL (Zachary/83, Gabriel/85, Damian/88) 2914 Carters Creek Station Rd, Columbia 38401 (change) ••• Gustavo & Michelle HUERTA (Monica/85, Cecilia/87, Gustavo/89, Teddy/93) 111 Tanglewood Dr, Dickson 37055 ••• Margaret & Thomas MEYER (Laura/87, Andrew/92) 8668 Wine Leaf Cv, Germantown 38139 **(H)**

TX — John & Tammy DOUGHERTY (Chelsea/82, Addison/85, Caroline/92) 1503 N Regina Ct, Irving 75062 ••• Russell & Judy JENNINGS (Michael/83, Sarah/84) 8811 Ridge Mountain, San Antonio 78250-4110

UT — Fred & Connie HADDEN (Sarah/84, Clifford/86) 985 SW Hoytsville Rd, Coalville 84017 (change)

VA — Dennis & Retha DANVERS (Katia/81, Marina/85) Richmond Ed'l Alternatives for Children at Home, 3403 Hawthorne Av, Richmond 23222

WA — Barbara & Gil KION-CROSBY (Parson/88, Willow/91) 1013 Harvard Av, Wenatchee 98801 **(H)**

WI — Robert & Julie CREGO (Joanna/80) 5923 Century Av, Middleton 53562 ••• Sharon & Frank DeSTEFANO (Nicholas/84, Danielle/86) 1007 W 6th St, Marshfield 54449 **(H)** ••• Annie & Richard KRUPNOW (Isaac/83, Sasha/87, Raven/91) N363 4th Av, Coloma 54930 (change) **(H)** ••• Carol & Martin STITT (Jason/85) 1768 Skyline Dr, Stoughton 53589 (change) ••• Phillip & Janice ZINDEL (Sarah/87) AV11807 Dana Rd, Woodruff 54568 (change) **(H)**

Other Locations — Camella ANSELMI & Christopher TURNER (Evan/89, Frano/92) Kaitaringa Rd, RD 1, Te Kuiti, North Island, **New Zealand (H)** ••• Mark & Peri COLEMAN (Bevan/80, Faith/81) 28 Charnock St, Largs North, SA 5016 **Australia** (change) **(H)** ••• Drew & Vanessa CORRIGAN (Amy/89) Canberra Home Education Network 23 Bardolph St, Bonython, ACT 2905 **Australia** ••• Angela & Tony EDWARD (Jade/84, Jenna/86, Jessica & Anthony/90) 2 Havilah Av, Wahroonga, NSW **Australia** 2076 ••• Ralph LATTIMORE & Alison LATTIMORE-HORRIDGE (Finnian/85, Tor/87) 3 Moncrieff St, Dickson, ACT 2602 **Australia** (change) **(H)** ••• Luisa MUNOZ (Michael/76, Serena/78, Arlen/80) Canon Mexico 35-A, Col. Juarez, Tijuana, BC **Mexico** ••• Rod & Kim WARK (Samuel/84, Matthew/87, Miriam/92) 21 Drummond Av, Leeds LS16 5JZ **England (H)**

Add to the Directory of Organizations:

CA — Mtn View Park Homeschoolers, 6603 Mammoth Av, Van Nuys 91405-4813 ••• W. San Fernando Valley Playgroup, c/o Brecht, 20555 Dumont St, Woodland Hills 91364; 818-888-2480

VA — Richmond Ed'l Alternatives for Children at Home, 3403 Hawthorne Av, Richmond 23222

WA — Homeschooling on the Palouse, SE 405 Hill, Pullman 99163

Outside of US — Canberra Home Education Network 23 Bardolph St, Bonython, ACT 2905, Australia

Address Changes:

Helpful Schools — Oak Meadow School, 703-552-3263 (new phone # only) ••• Our Lady of Victory School, 4436 E Alpine Dr, Post Falls 83854 208-773-7265

NC — North Carolinians for Home Education, 419 N Boylan Av, Raleigh 27603-1211

ENTRY FORM FOR DIRECTORY

Use this form to send us a new entry or a substantial address change to be run in the next available issue of GWS.

Adults (first *and* last names):

Organization (only if address is same as family):

Children (names/birthyears):

Full address (Street, City, State, Zip):

Are you willing to host traveling GWS readers who make advance arrangements in writing? Yes ___ No ___

Are you in the 1993 Directory (GWS #90) Yes ___ No ___
Or in the additions in this issue or in #93? Yes ___ No ___

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NH — New Hampshire Alliance for Home Education, 16 Winter Circle, Manchester 03103

Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. When writing to pen-pals, include your name and address on your letter. To be listed here, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. Please try to answer the letters you receive.

Becky SMITH (14) 71 Peninsula St, Sequim WA 98382; sailing, horses, marine biology ••• JENNINGS, 8811 Ridge Mountain, San Antonio TX 78250: Michael (10) computers, electronics, swimming; Sarah (9) music, cooking, sports ••• Hava McCARTER-RIBAKOFF (7) 1432 Sebastian Way, Sacramento CA 95864; unicorns, gymnastics, Barbies ••• COLLINS, Rt 1 Box 555, Seaside OR 97138: Seth (10) swimming, legos, basketball; Ethan (7) swimming, reptiles, art ••• Jennifer FITZSIMMONS (14) 14 Concord Rd, Watertown MA 02172; reading, cooking, Scouts ••• DeAnne MARTIN (8) 7304 36th Av E, Bradenton FL 34208; horses, gymnastics, candy ••• Rachel LASH (13) 5544 Maple Crest, Alfred Station NY 14803, nature, drawing, literature ••• GUNNISON, 1225 Seabright Av, Santa Cruz CA 95062: Leslie (12) sports, reading, animals; Sarah (10) reading, penpals, art ••• BOVE, 243 Plumosa Rd, Debary FL 32713: Chris (11) baseball, electronics, biking; Ben (6) biking, baseball Super NES ••• Abigail McNULTY-CZAPSKY (16) 884 West End Av #4, NY NY 10025; animals, writing, outdoors ••• Lindsey JOHNSON (11) 1410 Boxwood Trace, Acworth GA 30101; soccer, singing, acting ••• Paul BURKETT (9) 404 Emmons, Wyandotte MI 48192; pirates, legos, piano

Subscriptions & Renewals

Subscriptions start with the next issue published. Our current rates are $25 for 6 issues, $45 for 12 issues, $60 for 18 issues. GWS is published every other month. A single issue costs $4.50.

Rates for **Canadian** subscribers: $28/yr. **Outside of North America**: $40/yr airmail, $28/yr surface mail (allow 2-3 months). Subscribers in U.S. territories pay U.S. rates.

Foreign payments must be either money orders in US funds or checks drawn on US banks. We can't afford to accept personal checks from Canadian accounts, even if they have "US funds" written on them. We suggest that foreign subscribers use MasterCard or Visa if possible.

Address Changes. If you're moving, let us know your new address as soon as possible. Please enclose a recent label (or copy of one). Issues missed because of a change of address (that we weren't notified about) may be replaced for $2 each. The post office destroys your missed issues and charges us a notification fee, so we can't afford to replace them without charge.

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